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THE UNVEILING OF THE FALL

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THE UNVEILING OF THE FALL

BY

THE REV. C. W. FORMBY, M.A.

AUTHOR OF "EDUCATION AND MODERN SECULARISM," "RE-CREATION," "THE SOUL OF ENGLAND," ETC.

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORDS

THESE introductory pages aim at supplying a twofold assistance to my readers, first, by giving some preliminary idea of the subject, however sketchy, and also by examining the most definite of the objections raised by the experts of the first rank and other talented critics who kindly studied the work in typescript. To all these helpers in a very difficult task I am most deeply grateful.

Stated briefly, the situation confronting us is that the greater part of the prevailing confusion of thought regarding Christianity is due to past and present errors about the Fall. Therefore the book begins with a destructive side, which aims at exposing the untrue ideas and so gaining freedom from their fatal mislead. The constructive chapters, with their still wider range of facts, naturally suggest various difficulties to differing types of mind. It is noteworthy, however, that up to the present no important objections have been forthcoming.

But whatever mists may at first prevent a clear view of the whole subject the explanation of the Fall which is given cannot be mistaken for a mere unsubstantiated speculation. Its outlines and main

features have one and all been dictated by definite facts and reasoned conclusions which are clearly stated in the following chapters. It will be found to coincide exactly with numerous facts drawn from most varied departments of knowledge, and to be definitely contradicted by none. No other theory exists which explains such recondite problems of theology and science, and so many paradoxes of the inner spiritual experiences of humanity. Moreover, it explains them along one single line of thought and reasoning, by the light of one fundamental postulate. Lastly, it explains these otherwise inexplicable issues with a consistency and thoroughness which have every appearance of truth. In short, it will be found that whereas no amount of speculation will supply such a full, deep, and reasonable explanation of certain truths of Christianity and biology, the explanation given entails no unsubstantiated postulation, but merely accepting the evidence of a vast series of corroborating facts. That is to say, our search for the truth proceeds upon the recognised scientific principle which maintains that the theory which is best supported by evidence and which explains the largest number of otherwise inexplicable facts without violating any known truth, will probably prove to be correct.

In venturing to offer an outline of such an extensive subject I would remind my readers that it is impossible to include the various facts and lines of reasoning upon which the statements and conclusions are based. These will be found arranged

in natural sequence in the treatise itself. The outline is only intended to convey a helpful first impression of the issues before us. Therefore, verdicts upon the main conclusions must be suspended until the evidence of the subsequent chapters has been considered. Then let us pass on at once to a preliminary glance at the subject in hand.

Both reason and Christian teaching agree that the imperfect and sin-stricken human beings on this planet are not the original work of the uncrossed will of God, but are the results of His will having been violated. In the days when the Fall-story could be taken for historic fact these truths led neither to doubt nor difficulty. But when science drew aside the veil of childlike ideas the whole outlook became changed. It then became evident that man was no separate creation. With the aid of this light a great advance in Christian belief rapidly followed. It was recognised that evolution presents a series of beings of unbroken unity. The advance may be summed up in the words of the late Bishop Westcott, "all that lives, lives with one life." But if there is only one life, since all living beings are alike imperfect, and are one in the potential evil of the individualistic basis and competitive antagonism of their existence, how can it be said that man alone is "fallen"?

We cannot go back upon facts and our conclusions and create a fictitious division in this one life and in the one series of its manifestations. We cannot

maintain that although the will-power and vital energy of man is obviously vitiated and sin-stricken, the potential and partly developed will-power and vitality of the lower animals is by origin essentially and radically different and of an unvitiated order. Thus, as will be seen from the full evidence, we are driven to the conclusion that the vital energy by which all earthly beings exist is not only one in nature and essence, but is one in the inherent vitiation of its condition. We shall see that this source of evil is in no way due to matter or physical causes, but to the vital spiritual energy vitalising matter.

Let us retrace these outlines making use of other words. Science assures us that man is an inseparable part of a system of animal existence which contains in it no evidence of any Fall or change for the worse, but is uniformly imperfect from beginning to end. With this witness of imperfection our spiritual sensibilities and our keenest powers of perception entirely agree. They cause us to be vividly aware that no part of the natural system is quite as God would willingly have ordained it. The individualistic basis of the organic process seems as though it must, under existing conditions, inevitably have produced strife, degradation and misery. We believe that its self-centred basis and its kindred principles, as embodied in evolution, were by Divine wisdom necessary under the present type of existence. But we perceive that this is by nature a very lowly order of being. In spite of so much that is beautiful and glorious in it, those unmistakable

principles of blind, animal selfishness, of ruthless cruelty and ferocity, which run throughout it, and were embodied in instinct-structures long before human eras, show that it is ruined by evil. Thus our inmost consciousness rises up and condemns the very organic process which has produced our bodies, as sin-stricken.[1] Loyal faith in God's Perfection forbids us to believe that this system is the unruined outcome of His free and unfettered will. We can understand it as a part of a system of restoration and redemption, but not of original, divine creation. But if we believe the cause of the evil element to have been will-power in rebellion against God's laws, when and how did this evil psychological element gain access to the living system ?

Here the unveiling work of science comes to our aid. By many facts which will be adduced later, biology forbids us to suppose that the Fall occurred during organic evolution. Psychology follows with evidence of the same truth. In short, we are forced to conclude that the evil element is inherently connected with the vital energy. The evil in question is a spiritual or psychological vitiation of life itself before organic origins. The substantiating reasoning must necessarily for the present be withheld. But if evil is inherently present in the vital energy, why did well-educated people ever suppose that bodily life on this earth was once perfectly untouched by it, and entirely in accord with God's unfettered will ?

[1] *Vide* p. 31 *et seq.*, also p. 152.

Solely because, until science withdrew the veil, they mistook the picture-language of Genesis for historic fact, supposing that the story of Eden told of a perfect life which was without defect or suffering and yet was bodily.

It will be found on due consideration of the entire subject that the truth lies in a very different quarter, and that from all points of view there is little room for doubting that God's original creations were exalted beings gifted according to His perfect will with sinless freewill, and destined for some kind of angelic existence such as Scripture freely speaks of.

This gift would be in full consonance with God's love and power. It would entail an order of existence unspeakably higher and more noble than our fallen bodily life. In this direction lies the meaning of the imagery of Genesis and also the explanation of the cause, the purpose and defects of organic evolution and of our bodily life. Thus we shall be led to recognise that from organic origins throughout the living world, God has been working with a vital element vitiated and impotent. We shall also recognise that in the Fall it was spiritual degeneration and deliberate violation of the laws of God which caused the vital energy of the sin-stricken beings to cease to correspond to their glorious environment, and dying out of it to pass into a vitiated, impotent, association with matter. Thus the evil factor must have belonged in origin entirely to living wills and not to matter. It should be fairly clear even at first

sight, that if modern views are correct and the nature of the vital energy is of a psychological order, its vitiation must be also due to psychological, spiritual causation, that is to say, to some such spiritual failure as the above. Without some such spiritual disaster as the Fall, bodily life as we know it would never have existed. It is not the direct outcome of the will of God, but of His will crossed and violated by sin. Every fact of our existence and every possibility afforded by reasoning will be found to testify that such a spiritual catastrophe could not have been originated under the narrowed experience of an immature bodily life, but only under the more glorious and awful possibilities of far higher and more perfect conditions of being. Recognition of the deliberate and deadening nature of the sin behind the Fall, will lead us also to perceive more clearly and fully the mercy and profound reality of the salvation which has been wrought out and offered to us by Jesus Christ.

For some minds the perspective of this subject is entirely upset by the question as to what their own individuality was in a pre-organic state of being. All such questions regarding unknown conditions of the past or future are surely as unsound as they are futile. Both the future state of existence after death and the past before birth necessarily transcend our bodily experiences, and we have no knowledge of them in detail. Questions, in the nature of things unanswerable, may easily overcloud the information we possess, but cannot bestow illumination. For

many reasons we may rest assured that our individuality continues beyond these veils of the past and future. This is a basic fact of all our understanding of life and Christianity. Moreover, since individuality is the most exalted and greatly prized gift of our present lowly existence, no other life could be higher than this if individuality in it were something less, something more restricted, more self-centred, more narrow and incomplete, more excluded from the larger unity of the Divine Life Itself, and therefore less good, less perfect. The point we are chiefly concerned with here, is that the inevitable absence of detailed knowledge of extra-temporal states of existence cannot be urged as an objection to their reality, especially in the face of contrary evidence. Would anyone dream of adopting a similar attitude against the reality of the pre-human stages of the body, on the ground that the theory of evolution entails belief in a past requiring vast periods of time and unknown conditions of any individual prototype of any individual human body? In these great subjects we must be content for the present that the past record of the individual should seem merged in the life-history of the race.

It is not our aim to pry into the hidden mysteries of human existence, nor to attempt to understand details of either pre-bodily or post-bodily life. Our object is to call attention to new knowledge which has profoundly affected our spiritual outlook, but whose light and message remain unnoticed; to point out

how science has not only wiped out the tiny boundaries of the Eden-picture, but has unveiled beyond them a vast retrospective expanse of vital operations extending backwards through unthinkable ages to organic origins. But this is only a small portion of what the revelation entails. For the facts thus opened up to Christian recognition and thought teach us that we have no reason for thinking that the vital energy did not exist before living matter appeared on this planet, and many reasons for believing that it did. If materialism had made good its claims instead of hopelessly failing, if the position of vitalism had grown weaker with passing years instead of stronger, the following theory of the Fall would not rest upon such solid foundations as regards known facts. But to-day, according to due weighing of all evidence, the modern conception of life as a unique energy of a psychological nature is by far the most abreast of facts.

But if life is essentially distinct in nature from all forms of physical energy and did not originate from them, why should it be imagined that the vital energy did not exist before it began to vitalise matter on this planet? Thus by pointing out the false notion of special creation, science has also corrected the false ideas of life and the production of living beings, which had become based upon it. We know now that each body is not a mere isolated structure, but a part of one system of evolution. We know that all that lives, lives with one life, of which each unit although individualised is not an isolated and sudden creation,

but part of an energy which has laboured in evolutionary travail for countless ages. The facts provided by this side of the subject when fully reviewed, show that the belief that the vital energy pre-existed evolution is supported by ample evidence and opposed apparently by none.

On passing to critical objections to the above views, it has been remarked that these views of the Fall are more in keeping with Eastern than with European thought. This, of course, is a solid fact, but not one which affects the truth and value of our theory. Indeed, it is a comment rather upon the earth-bound limitations of Western thought. In comparison with this defect we recall how the insight of Indian mentality recognised the fact of organic evolution thousands of years before it became known to the West. Even at so late a date, it only gained credence in the West through the obvious physical proofs afforded by the discovery of the selective processes. We recall also how greatly the subject has been misunderstood, from Spencer onwards. Therefore, since Eastern thought gave us the imagery of the Fall-story, the true interpretation of it may safely be allowed to carry us into realms of thought also Eastern. Moreover, we are thus reminded that the fundamental truths of our Faith by divine dispensation and choice stand rooted in Eastern thought.

The criticism quoted above ends with the natural question "What is to be gained by postulating a pre-organic Fall?" Like the hypothesis that the

world is round, it explains a very great number of facts otherwise inexplicable. For instance, on the biological side, we shall find the light of this postulate revealing an exhaustive explanation of organic evolution. The vague, erratic character of the vital output is accounted for. The puzzling, contradictory movements of progress and retrogression become readily intelligible, as well as the eliminative action of so much of the evolutionary machinery. What are known as the selective processes are seen to be twin systems of *purposeful destruction*, as well as construction, both co-operating through the media of interacting beings in the twofold work of destroying the useless results of the vitiated vital energy, and ultimately building up every result which will minister, however indirectly, to the restoration of a spiritual life, which shall be comparatively sound and capable of being perfected.

On the religious side, the gain is surely far too enormous to be summarised. First and foremost stands the advantage of being able, once again, to give modern people a complete background to their religious knowledge, that is to say, a comprehensive, connected, and apparently true explanation of all that the Fall means and stands for, instead of offering them the blank of an allegory given without any interpretation truly compatible with the Christian doctrine of sin. No one will maintain that the promiscuous series of gaps and avowedly inexplicable difficulties attached to all other theories of the Fall can constitute a divinely appointed background to

Christian doctrine, sufficient for the needs of the present age. On the other hand, science offers facts which seem to point directly to an apparently true explanation of the main difficulties. It will be for the leaders of Christian thought, and the rank and file, to decide ultimately in what quarter the truth is to be found. With regard to the gains to Christian knowledge resulting from this explanation of the Fall, a brief attempt at a summary begins on page 178. The impossibility of conveying any adequate idea of these gains by a mere outline will be readily understood.

From every aspect this new light will be found to reveal wondrous realities of love and power centred in the Incarnation. Since we are limited to a few words, it would be easier than describing the new outlook to indicate the hopelessness of the present narrowed horizon. Under pre-evolutionary ideas Christian truths were easy to understand aright because the entire outlook was spiritualised and the material details veiled from thoughtful scrutiny. The spiritual teaching of Genesis enabled people to grasp the message of the Incarnation and to live by its power. The literal story of Eden usually formed the background of their theology. But to assert to-day that the tragic cause of the Fall was merely a wrong moral choice of immature man, and that this result of his impotence necessitated the stupendous operations of the remedial atoning Grace, involving the Incarnation and the work and death of the Son of God can only be to distort sacred truths. Such

foreshortened ideas falsify and contradict the transcendent character of the facts in question by forcing their entire history, their meaning and their relationship to humanity, into the impossible limits of man's earthly life. Violations of this kind must inevitably deprive Christian doctrines not only of their intelligibility, but also of the enormous extent of their meaning. They destroy the grandeur and magnitude of their messages. They dethrone them from their true position as the supreme directing facts of life, reducing them to small matters of doubtful reality. They obscure the whole of the two subjects, Christianity and biology, by showing their facts without that great background of transcendent realities which alone can supply the rest of the map to which they belong. For the facts adduced in the following pages seem to show beyond doubt that both the origin of sin and the object of the Incarnation carry us back to a past of the soul-life obviously antedating the present bodily existence. It may be that this will prove to be a much needed truth leading to that clearer, deeper knowledge of Christian doctrine for which our age seems to be so fully ripe.

But to turn to another issue, our subject opens up the extremely important question as to the extent to which the deeper thinkers of early Christianity were familiar with an inner meaning of the Fall-story. The issues which will come before us show that some of the reiterated expressions of St. Paul and the teaching they convey, could not have arisen from a

mere childlike belief in the historical truth in the story of Eden, but that whilst using the popular ideas for teaching purposes, he believed, like many other Christian thinkers, in the inner, deeper and true meaning of the imagery, namely, in the pre-bodily Fall.

Another objection has been raised to the breadth of these views, on the ground that the vast extent of time demanded by a pre-organic Fall tends to lessen the sense of man's guilt and responsibility for sin. In reply, it is evident that the secular knowledge of to-day often compels us to recognise that some events of the far-distant past are of the very deepest personal concern at the present moment. Science has not only carried us millions of years behind the old date for the creation, but it has forced us back over still more tremendous periods to the eras of primary nebulae. In such physical matters we readily admit that we could never understand present conditions without accepting these far-distant facts. Why then in spiritual matters should we insist that the history of our soul-life must not extend back beyond the tiny span which embraces only the last stages of bodily existence? With regard to hindering a recognition of the nature of sin and personal guilt, the length or shortness of the time since its origin can neither hide nor lessen its deadly character, if the plain Bible teaching be in any way accepted.

Let us complete these forewords by considering the objections raised to the views of the Fall attributed

to St. Paul. The dissentient critics consist of two groups. (1) Those who are inclined to doubt St. Paul's belief in deeper views of the Fall entailing a pre-organic existence, but who, recognising his consciousness of evil inherent in the whole creation, remain too uncertain to express any definite opinion either way. (2) Those prepared to assert offhand that St. Paul believed solely in a historical Adam and possessed no views incompatible with the literal meaning of the Fall-story. This latter position is very difficult to defend, for it can only be justified by giving detailed explanations of the Pauline passages in question, and by showing that the meaning of the language in each case is really compatible with a belief in a historically true Fall-story.

It is hoped that the following pages will make all the above issues clear and many others besides.

CHAPTER I

THE OBSCURATION OF THE FALL

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CHAPTER I

THE OBSCURATION OF THE FALL

SPEAKING recently of the great shock to religious belief caused by the discoveries of science Bishop Gore remarked,[1] "Seldom in history has any standard of orthodoxy been so rudely shattered as that on which the religion of the average Englishman reposed seventy years ago. And it has never really recovered. Of course, real faith in God and in Christ was not banished from our common life, perhaps not weakened. Religious movements have flourished. But anything like a common authoritative tradition of religious belief has been infinitely weakened. There is around us to-day a chaos of religious beliefs."

These words do not overstate existing conditions. Indeed, it would be difficult to exaggerate the dangers which are attending our present transition from the old unenquiring faith to a more intelligent understanding of Christian truth. But be it noted, it is not the changed ideas of the Creation-story which have caused the confusion and upheaval. It can

[1] *The Fall of Man*, A Sermon preached by Dr. Gore in Oxford and London.

make no ultimate difference to the great facts of Christianity whether God made the different species of beings on this earth by special acts or by the continuous operations of evolution.

But in the case of the Fall-story, the effect of scientific information has been very different, resulting in the most serious injury to Christian belief. Not because science has disproved the great fundamental fact of the Fall, but because a combination of events have created and spread abroad the false impression that it has. All that has really happened recently is that science has shown beyond doubt that the old literal interpretation of the Fall-story is not the true one. But this knowledge has come in an age when the true interpretation has become generally lost to view. The remarkable causes which have led to the obscuration of the truth will come clearly into sight in the following pages.

The havoc wrought by the ensuing confusion of ideas is beyond description. The obscuration of the Fall has overclouded and for many shut out altogether the entire mental background of Christian belief. In order to open up a bird's-eye view of the whole subject let us briefly recall the events which happened.

Directly science had shed her valuable light upon the old ideas of the Fall it became evident that the literal interpretation of such an obviously allegorical story must be the wrong one. But although the meaning of the catastrophe was thus thrust into the melting pot, various causes prevented the available

fragments of truth from being perceived and extracted. In the first place, the failure of the superficial interpretation of the Fall might reasonably have suggested that the truth would be found further beneath the surface, somewhere in the direction of the deeper Pauline and Patristic beliefs. Perhaps the materialism of the hour vetoed such possibilities. Certainly those who gave to Christendom the most unfortunate evolutionary theory of the Fall refused to accept guidance from any such ancient sources of illumination. On the other hand, they gave themselves no due time to consider the significance of the evidence laid at their feet by new biological discoveries.

The disastrous results of this course will become only too obvious as the subject unfolds. Meanwhile let us note the important truth disclosed by these issues, namely, that the chief modern explanation of the Fall was produced under very disadvantageous circumstances. The mental outlook was confused by bewildering clouds of new evolutional facts. It was a day of haste, and provision had to be made for the needs of the moment. The various endeavours to replace the old literal interpretation lacked deep thought and careful weighing of facts. Neither the biblical nor the scientific treasure-houses of knowledge were thoroughly searched for truths new and old.

Thus when the old literal belief was destroyed the public had nothing else to fall back upon but the

new untested evolutionary theory of the Fall. This theory maintains that the great disaster consisted of the moral and spiritual breakdown of the will which happened during evolution, at the point where our first two progenitors were first called upon for a definite choice between right and wrong. As we shall see, this explanation is fundamentally incorrect and untrue. At the time of its promulgation it had a certain appearance of accuracy and seemed to meet the necessities of the hour. It afforded a simple theory of the Fall which lent itself readily for use in moral instruction and squared easily with superficial facts. But its verisimilitude and its promise of usefulness have both turned out to be hollow deceptions.

Since theories can be judged by their fruits, we may notice that after having been led for some half a century by the ideas of this theory, we find ourselves to-day drifting further and further away from the Christian views of sin and its future consequences. For many minds sin has assumed the innocent form of mere natural immaturity. Nor can any modern theory of the Fall assert that it is in reality anything very different or more deadly. What need then to trouble about Christian doctrines and restraints? What need for Redemption or a saving Grace? Owing to such mistaken notions as these, the doctrine of sin and the doctrines connected with it are being frequently forsaken. In other words, when a belief in the literal truth of the Fall-story began to go, these fundamental beliefs of Christianity began to go

also. Not because they are inherently dependent upon the literal meaning of the Fall-story, but because the new evolutionary explanation of the Fall naturally leads in an opposite direction, to non-Christian conclusions.

Even though philosophic materialism has for some years been rejected as false, such has been the mislead of evolutionary views of the Fall that we have been quite unable to rise to more spiritual levels of life and interests. On the contrary, we have sunk into an empty unenquiring materialism. Physical development, bodily pleasures and all that is connected with them we understand and welcome. But we have no information of the Fall which speaks to us with the voice of actual fact regarding the soul-life. We cannot see what is the relationship existing between sin, atonement, redemption, and the truths of evolution. We cannot, therefore, understand what these vital facts have to do with our lives. Such are some of the typical difficulties which arise from our modern theory of the Fall. They are felt very commonly if seldom clearly expressed. Under these obscured and obscuring conditions a very large number of people have solved the problem by supposing that the Fall-story has no true meaning and no real message at all. This error has led and must always lead to the worst possible results. For even a hazy and partial understanding of the Fall may permit many rays of light to shine through upon such fundamental truths as the love and purpose of God in human life, the deadly nature of

sin, and man's need of help in his conflicts with its power. But the blank denial of any such catastrophe enshrouds the whole of our life in grossest darkness, blotting out its true aims and true values, its spiritual hopes and ideals. The ensuing destruction extends throughout man's higher capacities, sapping the vitality of his very joint-life with God, as well as all that is progressive and unifying in his joint-life with his brother man.

Neither the character of the individual nor the health of the corporate life can do without the fundamental truths which brought them into existence. The present condition of the civilised world reveals the lack of some element essential to a higher type of life and to sounder and more real progress. By general consent the element needed is spiritual. We want better men and women. Just such an uplift is required as would result to their spiritual natures from a less obscured faith and a genuine and unimpeded return to Jesus Christ.

The question will doubtless be asked, but how can false ideas of the Fall affect the minds and lives of the uneducated, unthinking masses? The actual facts and arguments do not reach their minds and thus act upon them directly. But the masses feel the weight of the influences adverse to religion most keenly, through the example and attitude of the more intellectual. Those who have come into intimate touch with the masses know how easily they

are led by the more powerful human element of their surroundings. There are many millions to-day sufficiently educated to realise that the Fall constitutes a fundamental doctrine upon which the main beliefs of sin and redemption are inseparably based. They are also fully aware that science has destroyed the literal explanation of the Fall-story, also that the current views regarding immature ancestors and their lapse are antagonistic to Christian doctrine. But they have never recognised what is the true meaning of the Fall. Now, although this group, consisting of the more intelligent members of each community, constitutes only a small minority, yet their influence predominates everywhere. They are the leaders in thought, in habit and fashion in each community. They are the individuals who create the formative mental and spiritual environment which moulds the beliefs and characters of the masses around them. For more than half a century these prominent individuals have gone out into the world without any clear compelling belief either in the reality of the Fall or in their own inherent need of Divine Grace. The great dominating truth of the Fall has long ceased to be the sure and informing background of their religious ideas. Instead of its illuminating facts, have stood gaps, demolition and uncertainties, constituting defects which have not only destroyed their own faith, but have caused them to shed around impressions fatally destructive to the spirit and beliefs of Christianity.

If we would test these facts and make certain that

a disbelief in the Fall is really such an insidious source of spiritual weakness, we need only confine our attention to individuals, and in them study the difficulties and standpoint of the intelligent modern mind. If conversation is not hampered by restraint their outlook upon Christianity will usually be found to be mistaken from the beginning. They are not thinking of humanity as fallen, or in any sense as being really in serious need of redemption and an uplifting Grace.[1] Their idea of mankind is a picture showing all the natural facts of life, but with the Fall entirely painted out. Their views are summed up in such expressions as these: "What you call sin cannot be very wrong, it's quite natural after all." "I cannot see why any redemption should have been necessary. The tendency to do wrong is only a matter of being undeveloped." Thus the fatal deficiency becomes apparent at once. The great fundamental facts of the Fall have been practically wiped out of their mental horizon. With the loss of these facts, the truth of Christianity must become unintelligible, or at least extremely visionary. Thus existing conditions show that the thinking individuals of all classes throughout Christendom are at present in danger of following the disastrous lead of false ideas and false theories, and that this is due chiefly to having been side-tracked in the matter of the Fall. Again, the unthinking individuals are in precisely

[1] This retrograde spiritual change rapidly became conspicuous. Compare Mr. W. E. Gladstone's warning of last century: "What England needs more than anything else is a deepening of the sense of sin."

the same position, owing indirectly to the same source of evil. Not because they themselves have been intellectually misled, but because they have been completely influenced by the secular examples and spirit of hosts of misguided mental superiors. Hence we are confronted by the strange paradox of to-day, namely, that in the hour of the world's history when theoretically the fallacy of materialism was never more generally acknowledged, in practice the worship of material pleasures never had more numerous or eager devotees of all classes.

Then the first leading fact to be recognised is that the most fertile cause of the confusion of Christian thought to-day is ultimately, either the obscuration or the total obliteration of the Fall. This inconspicuous fact entails another equally unnoticed, namely, that the popular evolutionary theory of the Fall is entirely false, and very much more misleading and dangerous than the erroneous literal interpretation which it supplanted. A proof of this statement will be found in the next chapter. We shall also notice in Chapter III. the actual causes which have brought this obscuration about, so that there can be no mistaking its nature. But the work before us is not only destructive. Upon the evidence of scriptural beliefs and teachings, supported as they are by a mass of biological facts, an explanation of the Fall-story is given which is apparently true, or very near to the truth.

We are now touching upon a remarkable and

important point. It is, that in spite of having caused such confusion in religious thought, evolutionary discoveries have in reality begun to unveil the true meaning of the Fall. For they have not only destroyed the old veil of literalism which formerly concealed the actual nature of the Fall beneath the imagery of Genesis, but they have up to a certain point completed the unveiling,[1] by revealing numerous biological facts which very clearly suggest the true meaning of the Fall, and can only be understood under the light which it gives. Neither the Fall nor evolution can be understood apart from each other. So long as the biological facts remain a mystery, so long will the Fall remain either obscured or obliterated.

It will be our object in the following pages to deal with the necessary evidence in order to exhibit the main issues in a clear light. The first step towards these results is to ascertain the truth about the theory which at present obscures the entire subject.

[1] The title of the book refers to the "unveiling" of the truth by scientific discoveries, not to this attempt to point out the issues.

CHAPTER II

THE DISPROOF OF THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY OF THE FALL

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CHAPTER II

THE DISPROOF OF THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY OF THE FALL

Of the three theories of the Fall, the evolutionary theory, the theory of super-added Grace, and the theory of Dr. Russel Wallace, only the first requires notice here. The others will be briefly referred to later.

In the evolutionary theory of the Fall we have the view most generally accepted to-day. As already stated, this theory supposes that the Fall represents the moral and spiritual breakdown of the will which happened to our original two human progenitors when their unfolding powers of moral sense were first called upon for a definite choice between right and wrong. We may note at the outset that this view of the great disaster offers a blank contradiction to the definite biblical teaching that pain and death are the results of the Fall. All attempts to evade such clear statements as [1] "for since by sin came death" are destined to fail, as the doctrine has centuries of support behind it.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 21.

Erratum, line 17, for "sin" read "man"

But let us at once begin our scrutiny by examining the theory itself and the suppositions on which it is based. We shall then be in a position to investigate its effects and the conclusions to which it leads. The first notable feature about it is its attractive aspect of truthfulness. Its main ideas readily grip the mind for two reasons. First, because the story of Genesis has made everyone familiar with the idea of the original first two progenitors of the race and their moral test and failure. Secondly, because certain actual facts are embodied in its composition which impart the fore-mentioned lustre of truthfulness.

The theory commends itself to the popular mind by reasoning somewhat as follows. We all know that in the life of every individual there comes a crisis when he is first called upon for some really important moral decision. If he rejects the right course and chooses the wrong he is in consequence morally weakened. He has in fact "fallen." Well, reason tells us, the same thing must have happened in the case of the first parents of the human race. There must have been a point in the life-history of the original pair of human beings when one or both were called upon to make an important moral choice. They rejected the right and chose the wrong course. Thereby they were morally weakened. In fact they fell. That is the meaning of the Fall-story. That was the Fall of mankind. For instead of handing on to their descendants a stronger will and moral sense, both were transmitted in a weaker condition.

The offspring in turn fell again, and propagated the same tendency to moral weakness in a more aggravated form, and so on up to the present day. Thus the effect of the fall of the original pair of human beings was to spread sin and ruin throughout the human race.

Now this explanation is so simple and so plausible, and the individual fall or first failure of everyone is so well known, that people are often ready to believe offhand that it explains both the Fall-story and the Fall. The truth is, neither are explained, only a confusion of thought created. The whole subject will become clear later when the theory has been fully examined. It will then be evident that some of the suppositions upon which it is based are so entirely unsubstantial and others so directly contrary to fact, that upon these grounds alone it is unworthy of any credence.

First, let us note the use this theory makes of the Fall-story. It does not allow that it is a picture containing a deep ulterior meaning. On the contrary, it reaffirms the literal truth of its most prominent teachings, such as the descent of all mankind from a single pair of progenitors and their moral test, their natural God-given ability to stand it, but their failure owing to deliberate and wilful choice. On the other hand, the feature of the special creation of man, discredited by science, is entirely abandoned. In short, the evolutionary theory of the Fall is in substance a free paraphrase of the narrative of Genesis with the particular personalities of Adam

and Eve wiped out, and with the background of the Garden of Eden and the fruit trees exchanged for a modern evolutionary setting. The two parents of humanity are no longer mature specimens like Adam and Eve, but are necessarily "primitive types." Yet their critical moral test and the catastrophic result are reaffirmed as literally true. And let it be carefully noted, it is assumed that these undeveloped first parents possessed moral powers naturally sufficient in the absence of wilful rebellion to have stood their test successfully.

But here a vitally important question arises. How many of these assumed facts upon which the theory is based are actually true? Namely:

(1) The actual descent of mankind from a "great variation" of a very highly specialised single pair.

(2) Their vitally important moral test.

(3) Their moral capacities sufficient in the absence of wilful rebellion to have withstood the test.

(4) The terrible disaster passing to the whole race through the heredity of an acquired weakness.

With regard to the first postulation, biological experts are by no means agreed. But even if this point be granted, a further and far more exacting demand is added by the next two suppositions. For the theory not only assumes a single pair of progenitors, but it demands that both shall be possessed of moral sense and powers sufficiently definite and

advanced to make an important moral choice. Now this last assumption is contrary to all evidence. The existence of one pair of anthropoids far and away more advanced in all-round development than the rest is thinkable. It is conceivable that such a pair, having no relations approaching their own perfection, became the sole progenitors of an altogether superior type, namely the human species. This species would multiply, and by degrees and in the course of centuries, under spiritual influences operating through the conditions of gregarious and social life, would develop both intellectual and moral sense. All this may be at least within the bounds of the possibilities prescribed by known facts. But when it is stated that this first single pair of advanced anthropoids, from whom the first true type of the human species originated, were possessed of actual and fairly mature moral sense, and were truly and actually capable of critical moral choice, the subject is carried into the realms of fiction or allegory. In these realms only do we find such fully equipped first parents as Adam and Eve, but not in those of biological fact. The evidence both of biology and psychology show that the primeval human species must have existed for very many centuries, and increased to great numbers, before the moral sense became developed at all, or at any rate sufficiently for anything like fully conscious and serious moral choice. In this case, the possibility of an original pair transmitting evil moral results to all posterity would be gone for ever. For the human race having already originated from non-

moral parents, and having already multiplied greatly, could not subsequently be ruined universally by the moral failure of any single pair. In short, the universality and supreme natural power of the Fall would be disproved. If we can only think loosely and vaguely of the Fall as "the first *men*"[1] choosing evil and thereby falling from grace, the disaster becomes only a normal result of the self-centred basis of evolution and man's brute antecedents, and sin mere immaturity.

No doubt, as soon as moral choice became possible to man, moral failures followed at once and have been repeated ever since. But none of these evolutionary failures, neither the first nor any, are what is meant by the Fall. In no sense were they causes of the Fall, but they are, as we shall see, one and all results of it.

The effect of the above investigations is to show that the postulation of a single pair of primeval parents of the whole race possessed of advanced moral sense is fictitious, and violently opposed to known facts. If so, the whole theory stands condemned. To argue that the primeval pair were not possessed of advanced moral and spiritual capacities, but depended upon a super-added grace for their guidance, would be to make another unsubstantiated assumption which, under the peculiar conditions of man's immaturity, would cast a very large share of the responsibility of his failure upon the insufficiency of Divine aid. The actual truth of the above verdict will become even more obvious on consideration

[1] Vide *Theology*, Aug. 1921, p. 89.

of further points. There will, however, be no need to examine the fourth postulation. Let us rather enquire from what source those which we have dealt with were derived.

Although the theory under discussion is a modern one bearing a name suggestive of modern discoveries, its fundamental ideas certainly did not originate from scientific guidance. It is obvious that anyone who in thought goes back to the era of anthropoid existence and searches for the first vestiges of human characteristics and the origin of the human species, knows only too well,—if he is carrying the light of scientific knowledge as his guide at all,—that he is groping in periods of almost, if not quite, unadulterated animalism, with the physical struggle for life around him in full swing. For such a student to talk of the lead of moral sense, or to expect moral choice amid this welter of ferocity and ruthless violence dominated by the dictates and passions of the primary instincts, would be to cast evidence to the winds, and to leap over probably very many thousands of intervening years, and to lose sight of all their laboured travail and slow progressive gains, under the misguidance of an absurd anachronism.

It is evident therefore that the above postulations, with their unsubstantiated ideas, are not due to scientific suggestions, but to accepting some of the ideas and statements of the ancient Fall-story as literally true. Hence came the fiction of the first two primeval parents born of anthropoids, yet endowed with what cannot possibly have been less

than effective and actual moral sense. In the case of Adam and Eve the possession of this gift of maturity was reasonable, since they were formed by alleged special creation. But the blind attribution of the same maturity and moral powers to the two evolutionary progenitors, coupled with the assertion that they were at the same time the two original immature parents of the race, is surely a sufficient condemnation of the character of the whole theory. For the error committed amounts to professing to discredit special creation in favour of the facts of evolution, whilst in reality postulating the special creation of advanced moral powers for the first two parents of the race, and casting the evidence of science to the winds.

In short, the theory of a single first pair possessed of unique moral gifts rendering them truly test-fit, places its adherents on the horns of a dilemma. For on the one hand, if we assume that the moral gifts were sufficiently real and advanced to render their possessors truly test-fit both in morality and in freewill, in fact fully responsible under a most serious test, we shall be postulating no mere "great variation," but the sudden appearance of the highest human sensibilities, which all evidence proves were far from being a natural product of even the most advanced civilisations after countless centuries of social travail. On the other hand, if we endeavour to avoid an unwarrantable belief in the sudden, special creation of these sensibilities, we must assume that the moral

sense and powers of moral choice possessed by the alleged unique first pair were only of a "very elementary" nature, and by no means highly specialised. But if so, what becomes of freewill and guilt? Moreover, there are further difficulties created by this view which clearly prove its untruth. In the first place, it would be impossible to maintain that the laws of a God of righteousness could have visited the pathetic failure of primary man's "very elementary" morality with the tragic far-reaching ruin known as the Fall. Such a disparity of moral cause and penal effect is surely contrary both to all principles of justice and to our experience of God's visitations upon the sins of childhood.

For let us briefly consider what the supposition before us really entails. If the moral powers of the first pair were as alleged, "very elementary" and yet unique, their environment contained no other beings capable of even this very elementary moral choice. In fact, none but this pair were higher than the non-moral or purely animal type. So that the very elementary moral sense of the parental couple, instead of being born into an environment of equally advanced beings amid which such sensibility would have possessed its own competitive value, was born into entirely brute surroundings naturally destructive of features lacking physical utility. What stimulus for their exercise and development would such unique moral gifts receive from contact with only pure animalism? Verily, under these jungle conditions neither guilt nor catastrophic effect could

reasonably or justly be charged against the failure of the " very elementary " morality.

Since the difficulty of an elementary error of immaturity being met by the greatest of penalties is so fatal, it has been argued that the first very elementary sin, though slight in itself, entailed a vast, cumulative, evil effect through the laws of heredity. The outcome of this idea is to shift the responsibility of the terrible results of the very elementary morality from the unique possessors to God, who ordained the laws of heredity and the conditions of bodily existence. Obviously the laws of heredity represent God's system whereby a just and cumulative effect is given to some extent to both good and evil, but apparently only temporarily to evil, and of necessity, in order to bring about its elimination. But this clear and well substantiated truth becomes flooded with confusion by a view which insists that God started the physical conditions of heredity upon their action of increasing evil and propagating sinfulness with nothing to arrest the fatal results of vitiated freewill except a " very elementary " morality. As we shall see later on, the heredity of evil only becomes intelligible when we realise that the evolutional process of which it is a part, is not only a constructive system, but also violently destructive of a large proportion of its own products which are not sufficiently in line with the current advance towards the ultimate purpose, or which contain factors opposed to that purpose. Constructive progress is so closely interwoven with destructive elimination, that the one

seems sometimes to proceed only by means of the other. Beneath these complexities the laws of heredity effect their appointed tasks, but by workings which are chiefly unknown.

But the view we are criticising crosses the facts of heredity at another point. It is founded upon a belief in the transmission of acquired modifications. Whereas, according to the trend of scientific opinion, such transmission probably does not take place, since heredity acts along other lines. So that this idea is based upon a fundamental assumption which is at best uncertain and probably destined to prove untrue.

Lastly, this view not only lands us amid quicksands, but it subverts the whole doctrine of the Fall by doing away both with its venial guilt and its supreme causality of evil as resulting from deliberate, conscious misuse of freewill. Instead of one such genuine catastrophic rebellion, we are asked to substitute a vast succession of more or less irresponsible and immature moral failures extending back into the most dim and distant eras. Thus human sinfulness is no longer supposed to be the effect of one disastrous set of failures on the part of perfectly test-fit powers, but to be the result of a universal, natural deficiency. Sin, in fact, is attributed to a universal and therefore normal lack of development, rather than to any inherent, intelligible sinfulness. Therefore the net outcome of this latter alternative view is to shift the blame for sinfulness from man to his Maker, without providing us with any

idea of the true cause of the original inherent element of evil which bodily life so fully opens out to our consciousness. Thus, apart from the primary biological objections with which we started, the disproof of the evolutionary theory of the Fall is rendered complete by the fact that both the test-fit view and the non-test-fit or very-elementary-morality view are equally impossible. The conclusion is that the Fall did not occur at any stage of organic evolution, but before it.

Since we have probably adduced sufficient proof of the untruth of the evolutionary theory of the Fall so far as the fundamental, direct facts are concerned, let us pass on to examine the varied proofs of its falseness, which are forthcoming from the deficiencies and impossibilities to which it leads. They may be enumerated as follows :

I. The theory supplies neither explanation nor reason for the fallenness of man's original animalism and degradation.

II. It creates an insuperable difficulty regarding the justice and the moral responsibility of God for the critical severity of the alleged test of immature man.

III. It gives us no adequate solution of the problems of pain and suffering, either of the lower creation or man.

IV. Its assertion that the pre-human stage of evolution was unmarred by sin and is an

unvitiated work of creation, attributes to God contradictory methods.

V. According to this theory the above disproof of the moral first progenitors renders the universality of the Fall impossible.

VI. It offers no solution of the antinomy mentioned on page 81.

In order to make the remaining evidence as clear as possible, and in order to enable the reader to gain a view of the whole position, it seems advisable to anticipate things by stating briefly what the truth about the Fall appears to be. The facts thus disclosed may assist in showing the whole subject in a stronger light.

In contrast to all theories which suppose that the great disaster took place during man's earthly life, it is maintained that it occurred before the earthly existence of man, and before, or simultaneously with the origin of all organic beings. This is not a mere speculation, but a conclusion based upon strong and varied evidence. The following short digression will give some idea of the facts which become disclosed.

Those who have been accustomed to accept the old views of the Fall and to regard evolution as an unhindered system of divine creation have probably been astonished at times by the overwhelming signs of imperfection and impotence in the laboured advance of progressing development. Why, they feel bound to ask, should the vital factors ordained and empowered by God Himself have proved so utterly

powerless to produce the human body without having first produced such innumerable types of inferior creatures, and such a vast array of degenerate and deviating structures? Why so many failures and such impotent attempts? Why such absence of the creative initiating power of the Divine Will over matter? Why such a zig-zag blood-stained course to the goal of the human organism? But with the light of the Fall these many signs of unreceptive deadness to God's re-creative Spirit are seen to be due to the vitiated nature of the vital energy.

Again, evidence of the same kind, but far less obscure, is forthcoming from the later periods of evolution, after man had reached human level and become crowned with fully conscious powers. Why [1] for countless ages did he manifest the same fatal tendency towards mental deviations of all kinds, rather than towards the manifold lines of intellectual, moral and social progress which lay ahead? Why was his normal output of thought and conduct as erratic as the original vital output of bodily structures? Not infrequently all such features, as well as all the evil and misery in the world, are attributed to *a lack of development* which has produced brutish "fallenness." [2] But to suppose that any explanation can be forthcoming from such superficial expressions is to forget that this very *lack of development*, this very fact of being submerged in impotent animalism,

[1] *Unity of Nature*, Duke of Argyll, chapter x.

[2] *Foundations*, p. 283.

can only be explained by the truths which the Fall discloses.

Close observation of primary vital phenomena shows that long before bodily development had reached any semblance of the human type, traces of potential evil abounded throughout the organic process. The bodily life of all living beings is founded upon an individualised basis which from primary origins has produced all kinds of self-centred competitive strife. It would be impossible to observe the self-centred nature of the units of life and the self-centred principles upon which the exigencies of their material existence are met, together with their inseparable adjuncts of parasitism and warfare, without being impressed by the truth that the undevelopment of moral consciousness is the only missing element which prevents the ruthless struggle for organic existence from being stamped at some points with actual sinfulness. Since it lacks this, it can only be said to be potentially evil, although essentially vitiated.

Moreover, as we fix our attention on this self-centred struggle of animal existence and watch its development, we observe that its rampant individualism is no mere feature of immaturity which naturally diminishes or becomes transformed as evolution progresses. On the contrary, as consciousness dawns in varying degrees, spreading into various subjects, so the self-centredness enlarges its borders. From being potentially evil it unfolds into being actually sinful. The first glance at jungle life reveals its own secret. The organic process does

not change its nature nor the character of its basis as it proceeds. Throughout its course it continues naturally upon principles of the same self-centred individualism. From the self-centred nature of the primary instinct-structures up to the ruthless individualism embodied in slave-laws and in many cruel customs of the natural man its character is uniform.

Now, will any reasonable person attempt to break this unbroken and continuous process of self-centred animalism into two parts where the Fall is supposed to have occurred? And will he attempt to say, not only that the *latter* part is sin-stricken and fallen, but that the *first* part can be distinguished from it by being without trace of ruthless individualism, dominant self-centredness or any sign of potential evil? Obviously this entire organic process, if not actually sin-producing, is, according to its natural self-centred principles, certainly conducive to sin, and has never ceased to manifest signs of this fact. From the potential traces of earlier stages to the evils of the present hour, the sin-stricken nature of the entire organic process may be judged from the fact that wherever its inherent principles of self-centred egotism have had full sway and found their fullest expression, unrestrained by higher influences, they have resulted in natural developments most diametrically opposed to the principles of the Gospel. In other words, the final proof of the natural character of the living world is to be found in its fruits. Take away from the natural process the whole element of

the supernatural. Take away religion and all that belongs to it. Take away man's spiritual joint-life with God. Take away faith, prayer, worship and Christianity. And what is left? The natural man and the reign of a dominant animalism. Something worse than pure paganism at its worst. As a matter of history, such unadulterated phases of pure naturalism have never apparently existed for long. They are suicidal. They may appear in such flashes of manifested devilry as Russia is witnessing. But although they soon vanish from sight or become transformed, at least they reveal the truth in question, namely that the whole organic process exists upon a sin-stricken basis, and its vital factors are naturally fallen and sin-stricken.[1]

On taking an extensive and penetrating view of the phenomena of organic evolution, it would be impossible to avoid asking what kind of factors can have caused such a ruthlessly self-centred process to unfold itself, revealing such terrible traits of naturally dominant animalism? There are only two directions in which the causal factors can be supposed to have originated. Either they must be mainly due to physical causes, or to psychical or spiritual causes. The materialistic view of organic evolution has been tried and scrapped as inadequate and untrue. The spiritual view will be found to coincide closely with the explanation of the Fall upon which we are entering.

[1] This view agrees with the Augustinian opinion that the only evil is *peccatum et poena peccati*.

On returning from this necessary digression to the subject of disproving the evolutionary theory of the Fall, let us note that a primary defect is that it offers no real explanation of the "degradation" and "fallenness" of primeval man when in his purely animal state.

It merely places him before us already burdened with an inherently self-centred nature, dominated by those instinctive structures of animalism whose overpowering bias towards evil even to-day, after centuries of civilisation and restraint, is still sometimes irresistible. Thus this theory puts man before us in a practically fallen condition from the start, without explaining why he became so. It then proceeds to assign to him a penalty surely due only to wilful sin, because his immature moral and spiritual powers did not enable him to exert sufficient control over the impulses of his primeval instincts and their dominant mechanisms. We know from the facts of evolution that man first lacked moral consciousness altogether, and has always more or less lacked will-power to follow its light. But the theory in question offers no suggestion as to how he came to appear on earth without receiving from his Maker some saving heritage of sonship, such as an inherent receptivity towards virtue, or a sense of right at least sufficient to have saved him in the hour of the critical first choice upon which the fate of the whole race is alleged to have hung. Instead of being thus divinely enabled to meet the unequal chances of his test, man appears on the scene not only without such

gifts, but bearing the burden of dominating, self-centred, animal instincts and their impelling physical structures.

It might perhaps be objected that the above conditions were merely God's method of producing moral beings. But has it produced them in the majority of cases? The clear verdict of modern psychology is that the result of the terrible bygone domination of the primary instincts has not been to raise human nature, but very much the reverse. Deep within the subconscious brain lie the worst carnal evil and fiendish instincts, the apparent products of our animal ancestry. Can we believe that He who created the holy angels of heaven willingly adopted this method as a preparation for an existence so profoundly dissimilar? Even if this view seemed likely, in this case, as we shall see, it is forbidden by a great mass of evidence. Thus, judging from evidence, the whole organic system is vitiated and sin-stricken from its start. The cause of this disaster must not be sought in the poor, moral failure of some immature specimens of our race, but in tremendous causes behind organic origins and preceding the whole evolutionary process. The Fall obviously preceded earthly life. The vitiated results of this disaster are as surely evident amid primary vital phenomena as they are in the worst vices of conscious man. Thus the light of a pre-organic or pre-bodily Fall will explain these problems as no other supposition can.

If we examine the erroneous theory one step further, another insoluble difficulty meets us. For if the Fall did not happen until the comparatively late stage in evolution when man made his appearance, we must attribute the millions of years of previous suffering endured by the whole animal creation to the direct action and will of God. We must suppose that, although no sin had been committed, yet God for no remedial or curative purpose, but by way of the best possible system of creation, devised the painful process of evolution as we know it, and kept its ceaseless travail going for millions of years, inserting into it, for creative purposes only, the factors causing its self-centred competitive character, and those responsible for the domination of the primary instincts of animalism ;—those factors which for ages have directly led to countless woes and ceaseless suffering. Does this terrible natural process look like the direct unfettered work of an omnipotent and wholly beneficent Intelligence ? Under the necessity of this theory we must suppose that all the fierce animal traits thus developed, which have been in part inherited by man as stereotyped structures, to his great undoing, were all produced by the direct will of God as yet uncrossed and unconfounded by any act of wilful transgressing on the part of any created being. Does this look like a Divine system of creation ? Moreover, does it still appear to be so, when we remember that Jesus Christ tells us that after all this travail it will fail to achieve the final salvation of the majority ? Could

it be possible that such results should ensue from God's handiwork crossed only by the errors of one pair of semi-developed not fully responsible beings ?

Yet again, if we accept this theory we must suppose that when prehistoric man first arrived on the scene in all his pathetic degradation, bearing his overwhelming load of atavistic brutishness, he was still unfallen. In fact he was the identical being spoken of in the Bible under the figure of Adam, and there described as living in the Paradise of Eden, where he enjoyed close communion with God.

Now the logical outcome of such a theory is to commit us to the impossible belief that both sin and suffering came into existence as a practically unavoidable outcome of God's direct action. Unavoidable, because the theory asserts that man's fatal trial and Fall occurred at the early stage when his moral consciousness and will *first* came into action. In other words, man was not subjected to an ordinary test such as our normal temptations to-day. On the contrary, the most critical and deadly trial of his existence had to be faced at the very time when his instinctive structures and undisciplined animal propensities were almost if not quite at the zenith of their strength. That is to say, at a time when the possibilities of his moral victory were very much less than at later periods. Now all these difficulties [1] vanish under the pre-organic theory.

[1] *Vide* p. 178.

In the face of these objections, what can be said in favour of the evolutionary theory? Its ablest exponent, Dr. Tennant, writes: [1] "According to evolutionary doctrine, man's constitution is at first simply animal. He inherits the tendencies of his stock, the original material of impulse and emotion out of which sin is soon easily made. . . . We cannot say of our inborn propensities that they ought not to be, but only that they ought not to be unmoralised. . . . They are simply the conditions which render virtue and vice equally a possibility when will and consciousness have been acquired."

Here the statement that our inborn propensities "are simply conditions which render virtue and vice equally a possibility when will and conscience have been acquired" is plainly inaccurate. Are we to believe that at any stage in the existence of prehistoric man, or even of modern man, the inborn propensities normally render virtue and vice "equally a possibility" where will and conscience exist? Has the natural man ever acquired sufficient will and conscience to render them so? If such a spiritual giant as S. Paul was compelled to lament the utter impotence of his natural will apart from Christ, can we doubt that early man never on any one single occasion found that his inborn propensities rendered virtue and vice *equally possible*? Thus the whole of Dr. Tennant's argument fails.

It is evident that no crucial test and no Fall of far reaching consequences can be assigned to the early

[1] *The Origin of Sin*, p. 117.

evolutional period without attributing the unavoidable result to the practically direct action and will of God.[1] The same final flaw in the evolutionary theory becomes again apparent in the writings of the same able author. He remarks : [2] "It has been previously shown in detail how both the possibility of sin and the opportunity for its realisation exist, in the first instance, independently of the individual's choice. The opportunity is supplied by his inherited organic nature and by his social environment, for neither of which he is in any wise responsible. . . . It follows then that responsibility for the possibility of moral evil and for the opportunity of its realisation lies with God : that responsibility for the actuality of the moral evil lies with man."

But what does this passage really mean ? It means that God, having formed prehistoric man without giving him a choice of conditions and having placed him on trial under conditions which proved almost if not quite overwhelmingly unfavourable, is not to be held responsible for man's failure, but only responsible for the "possibility" of his failure. But who in such a case is to be held responsible for this practical impossibility of his success ? There could be no more final condemnation of the evolutional theory than the fact that its exigencies forbid any better defence than that of this talented writer.

Referring to this subject, Dr. F. J. Hall rightly observes, [3] "To suppose that God may do evil that

[1] James i. 13, also pp. 31, 152. [2] *Origin of Sin*, p. 122.

[3] *Evolution and the Fall*, Dr. F. J. Hall, pp. 219, 221.

good may come is impossible for those who perceive what evil means. We are precluded by all our knowledge of God from believing that the origin of sin is due to divine connivance. . . . It is not the degree of guilt that determines the responsibility of God, if He puts them of His own will to a probation in which avoidance of sin is practically impossible and then holds them guilty for sinning."

Let us now examine this theory from a new and important standpoint. Although bodily development has led to advanced types of life and to man, self-centred individualism has remained the root-principle of the *natural* organic life. From this system of evolution no sinless human product has ever come forth.

Then, in contrast to the self-centred individualism of the natural life, let us consider the revelation of the Incarnation. Jesus Christ Himself was a living embodiment of the diametrically opposite spirit of a God-centred love and altruism. In His presence the natural man stood condemned as a fallen being in hopeless bondage and subservience to the sin-stricken system to which he belonged. Now, in contrast to the sinful natural life of man with its rampant individualism and self-centred antagonism, Christ re-created in man the God-centred spirit. In place of the old Adam of non-moral animalism, He raised up a new-born spiritual vitality capable of sharing a true spiritual joint-life with Himself. And He wrought a change of a similar nature in the

corporate life of mankind, so that here too we meet a similar contrast. For, in opposition to the self-centred principles embodied in the corporate existence of pagan man, Christ formed the nucleus of His kingdom only of repentant souls, that is to say of individuals whose whole beings had changed in attitude towards the purely natural life. They had been lifted out of its bondage, they no longer desired its gifts, they were no longer obedient to its principles. They were souls redeemed out of the natural self-centred order and re-born into the supernatural order, by means of a spiritual joint-life with Christ. In this order the reigning principles were not those of the old self-centred natural life, but those of Christ's God-centred existence.

That is to say, instead of the competitive hatred and distrust of the natural life, were love and brotherhood; instead of disintegration and discord, were unity and goodwill. But in spite of the definite character of the contrasts, Christ did not reverse or supersede the laws of the natural order. They remained the same. But He opened a Door and a Way to a higher order of existence to which by being He belonged. Since access to that life was only by true spiritual joint-life with Himself, He was truly both the Door and the Way. The complete contrast of principles reigning within the two orders of existence suggest that the natural existence is "fallen" from origin to head. We are here reminded of the profound observation of a well-known theologian who asserted that the Cross of Christ was a revelation

of the wrongness of the whole natural order. Let us note in passing, that this statement contains a blank contradiction of the theory under discussion. For what is said to be wrong or sin-stricken, is not only man, but the entire organic system.

Now the above facts expose a diametrical contrast between the principles embodied in the early stages of the organic process alleged by this theory to be sinless, and the principles which Christ seeks to embody in redeemed individuals and in the redeemed corporate life. In view of this contrast, it is evident that since the evolutionary theory of the Fall asserts that the primary stages of evolution are unfallen and sinless, it implies that God as a method of creation established a self-centred natural process destined to evolve inevitably and without any Fall, the individualism, strife and competitive antagonism of the animal world. Thus having produced from sinless factors the natural result of self-centred animal beings embodying all the principles of the brutish ruthlessness of instinct-control, this theory implies that God ascertained the failure of these beings to obey the moral law, and then not only permitted terrible penal consequences, but proceeded to unmake the lawless animal tendencies He had evolved, by changing the formative principles of their environment. In short, that God, having continued the organic process as a purely constructive method for countless ages upon the self-centred principles of ruthless competition and instinct-control, sought

in later stages to unmake what He had made, by spiritual influences, by recourse to the moral teaching of the Bible, and by the power of the Incarnation. Thus the method attributed to God amounts virtually to self-contradiction. It involves creating the brutality of animal tendencies and ruthless self-centred individualism from sinless factors, thereby rendering His creatures unfit for higher life, and then unmaking these characteristics, and, if possible, building up the opposite nature of a God-centred altruism.

Now all this is an obvious fallacy. But it is the impossible position reached by the evolutionary theory of the Fall and its refusal to recognise the truth that sin pre-existed bodily life, probably rendering the organic process inevitable, since it was doubtless under Divine mercy the most beneficent remedial course possible. Therefore, although the process would necessarily still contain the factors vitiated by sin, it would afford one further opportunity of that spiritual correction and restoration which is so abundantly offered. It can scarcely be denied that organic evolution and human life, especially under Christian civilisation, viewed from end to end, considering infancy, school-days, subsequent discipline, and above all religious influences, look more like a system having such a spiritual purpose behind it than anything else. No piece of knowledge is of more assistance towards realising the absolute certainty of this purpose than a true notion of the main facts of the Fall.

With regard to the contrasting principles of the natural and the redeemed life, a full explanation is forthcoming from the pre-organic vitiation of vital factors. The truth appears to be, not that the organic process was the divinely chosen method of creating or preparing souls for the redeemed existence which should be offered, but that it was under fallen conditions the best system possible and productive of the highest results attainable by a vital energy already vitiated and ruined. Although such a system must needs be defective, and by nature powerless to lead to perfect development, yet it is evidently a most merciful though not infallible means of preventing worse and more painful consequences. Therefore we find that organic evolution is throughout not merely a process of constructive vital output, but a powerfully destructive process as well. Not only is something being built up and preserved, but something is being eliminated and destroyed. In the lower struggle for life, the species eliminated are in the long run those which we call unfit and unprogressive, that is, not progressively good. In the highest levels of human life, on the whole, that which is being destroyed under Christianity is clearly evil, and that which is being fostered and built up is good. Thus the vitiation and the consequent destruction are visible persisting through the whole system.

Two further difficulties created by this theory contribute their weight of evidence against its truth.

One is the obliteration of the universality of the Fall caused by the disproof of moral first progenitors. The other is the complete failure to explain the antinomy[1] of the doctrine of sin.

As mentioned above, all these serious difficulties and deficiencies disappear under the light of the pre-organic theory. The solutions forthcoming from this source have not been given in the above pages because they belong to subjects discussed later on. The references[2] will, however, make it easy to turn to any of these explanations so that the light of the true theory may be compared with the darkness of error.

The crowded subject-matter of this chapter has prevented consideration of the fatal effect of this theory upon Christian beliefs. It will be sufficient to note here that the false teaching, which starts by confusing the negative weakness of immature error with the positive, vicious and obstinate rebellion which obviously underlies the Fall and reappears in wilful human sin, shuts out from the sight of young and old every clear glimpse of the deadly nature of sin. Thus it creates a spiritual and mental atmosphere in which deep repentance can neither kindle, smoulder, nor burst into flames.

With regard to the two untrue theories not yet dealt with, very little need be said. Some of the difficulties of the subject are slightly mitigated by the old theory of superadded grace tacked on to the

[1] p. 81. [2] p. 178.

evolutionary theory. But none are finally removed. Moreover, it will be found to lack that correspondence with evolutional facts which the true explanation of the Fall so fully exhibits.

The theory of superadded grace is derived from the ancient idea of " dona superaddita," the added gifts being spiritual. The modern counterpart maintains that during the earlier stages of evolution man had the help of a supernatural grace which gave him immunity from death. This gift would have enabled him to resist the power of evil and death indefinitely, had he not wilfully refused it. But what about the origin of instinctive structures ? Did the grace not operate until their fatal control had been established ? Such a theory begins by making most extensive suppositions, and ends by leaving us confronted by most of the difficulties of the theory just considered. There are no known facts in the past of man's existence on earth which point either to his having formerly possessed higher spiritual powers and fuller control of his primary instincts than during historic ages. Nor are there traces pointing to the subsequent disappearance of these powers. But even if this deviation from the unity of the evolutional method be admitted as feasible, the theory is entirely speculative, and fails to justify itself by offering any solution of fundamental problems.

Although the human body has been evolved by a continuous process, it is obvious that human personality might have originated from a descent of spiritual entities into the evolving beings at some remote

period. A theory of this kind was favoured by the late Dr. A. R. Wallace. He considered that there were good reasons for [1] "placing man apart not only as the head and culminating point of the grand series of organic nature, but in some degree as a new departure and distinct order of being." But these views are absolutely unsupported by any kind of evidence, and have consequently never become widely accepted. The truth is, that we cannot escape from any of the more serious difficulties so long as we imagine that the Fall could have taken place at any stage after the process of bodily development had begun.

Finally, with regard to the disproof of the evolutionary theory, whilst no facts are forthcoming to show that the Fall occurred during evolution, it would be difficult to imagine that any theory could be met with fuller evidence of its untruth. On the other hand, we have before us varied and weighty evidence that some great vitiating disaster of the nature of the Fall preceded organic evolution.

[1] *Natural Selection*, A. R. Wallace, p. 181.

CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND GROWTH OF THE OBSCURATION

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CHAPTER III

THE NATURE AND GROWTH OF THE OBSCURATION

THE subject of this chapter naturally opens with the question as to whether there are any grounds for believing that such a calamitous change as the Fall ever took place in the soul-life of humanity? Since the doctrine of evolution is true, why should not the defective condition of man's moral nature be due solely to his lowly origin from which he has not yet emerged? Why should not sin be due to material causes?

These questions will be fully answered as the subject unfolds. When the meaning of the Fall has been fully considered, the reality of its occurrence will probably appear to be beyond all reasonable doubt. On the other hand, to deny its reality off-hand, without due investigation, to shut one's eyes to the consequences of such a step, and to hurry on with the work and pleasures of life, would be indeed to cut the knot with a vengeance. Such a course can only lead to disastrous results. So far from winning freedom from the bondage which lies upon humanity, it means severing one of the most vital of those bonds

of truth which are enabling mankind to rise from animality and draw closer to God in understanding, in reverent love, in faith and hope. Without the revelation contained in the Fall, both the soul-history of man and the story of his tortuous journey of evolution must remain aimless puzzles. Without it, the suffering and trials of bodily existence must lack their true explanation. Without it, the doctrine of the Redemption is robbed of its full meaning.

We may well close these preliminary remarks by recalling the words of Dr. Westcott, which unveil yet other features of this profound subject.

"[1] No view of the human state is so inexpressibly sad as that which leaves out the Fall. The existence of evil in its many forms, as self-will and suffering and vice and crime, cannot be gainsaid, and, if this evil belongs to the essence of man as created, then there can be no prospect of relief here or hereafter. Sin will propagate sin in inevitable succession, as the greatest of ancient poets sang. Misery will be as the shadow which man casts when the sun is brightest. There can be nothing in him to drive out that which is part of his true self. The stream as it flows will always fall below its source. And this awful and inexorable rule knows in nature no reversal or repeal. Endless retribution is the plain teaching of the invariable sequence which we call natural law. Effectual forgiveness is the revelation of the Gospel."

[1] *Social Aspects of Christianity*, p. 12.

In order to discriminate between existing ideas of the Fall, it is necessary to enquire briefly what views were most widely believed in the past. We shall enter upon a clear and correct understanding of this subject if we note that Christian views of the Fall have always been of two kinds. First, the various differing theories which have sought to find the true meaning hidden within the imagery of Genesis. Secondly, the opinion that the Fall-story has no hidden meaning at all, but is literally true history. It is obvious that the persistence of these two contrasting opinions all down the Christian centuries has been due to the unequal mental powers of individuals in every period, coupled with the vital need of all alike of knowing the great spiritual truths which the story teaches. So we shall gain a correct idea of this important difference of opinion existing from earliest times, if we recognise on the one hand a group of a few deep thinkers contributing to those requiring intellectual guidance the fruits of their learning and illumination ; on the other hand, the great majority of Christians having their needs fully satisfied by an unenquiring belief in the imagery of the Fall-story understood literally.

Among the first group of Christian thinkers who dealt with the subject of the Fall were St. Paul, and at a later date the foremost of the early Christian Fathers. A point to be clearly noticed is the very distinct nature of these two groups of believers, namely the comparatively few thinkers firmly grasping various features of an inner meaning of the Fall-

story, and the vast mass of unenquiring Christians perfectly content with the literal facts and inclined to oppose deeper views which seem to undermine their own.

Of these contrasting attitudes towards the Fall-story, after the second century and onwards, the Church apparently encouraged an unenquiring faith in the literal truth of the narrative, rather than a desire to reach the inner meaning. The reasons for this doctrinal guidance, which were doubtless very wise in past centuries amid a lack of learning, have long ago ceased to exist. They varied from an urgent need for a safe and simple doctrine suitable to pre-education conditions, to the dread of those fatal errors regarding spirit and matter which were only too well known to the early guardians of the truth. Thus[1] the unnecessary speculations of such extremely active thinkers as Origen defeated the steady advance towards the true meaning of the Fall by producing a re-action in favour of teaching the literal views. Not because such a belief was the more accurate, but because it was easiest to grip, safer and less liable to distortion by heretics. Later on we shall revert to this subject when dealing with contingent matters.

In mentioning the extensive speculations of some of the Early Fathers we are touching upon the great weakness of the thinker's position in bygone centuries. The Patristic theories entered too freely into

[1] Vide *The Fall and Original Sin*, Dr. Tennant, chapter xiii.

unknown details to be able to retain accuracy of vision. In attempting to reach the whole meaning of the Fall in the absence of guiding facts they were venturing upon a dangerous and unknown territory. St. Paul had led them towards the true direction, but he seems to have considered such advance sufficient for the times. For he left them there. Many probably gleaned from his writings the truth that the Fall preceded the bodily life of man. But for details beyond this visionary impression they lacked the guidance of undoubted facts. Some were too ready to fill in such gaps in their knowledge by unsubstantiated speculation. In treading this shadowy region the brightest illumination and the keenest insight could not compensate for want of landmarks and prevent lack of information from leading to error. Contrary to what might have been expected, the history of the succeeding centuries up to the nineteenth reveals a continuous spreading not of the deeper and possible views of the Fall, but of the impossible belief in its literal truth. Almost all subsequent influences seem to have united towards producing this result. The period of scholasticism may have imparted a very slight impetus in an opposite direction. If so, its influence soon ceased and another group of factors favouring the growth of the simpler views came into vigorous action. For a time less importance came to be attached to the intellectual side of doctrines and more to the practical and spiritual. The Reformation, and later on the rise of Evangelicism emphasising

the theology of the inner life, were influences tending to propagate a simple and unenquiring faith. Still later, from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century, the growth of natural science exerted a curious stimulus towards the same result. For as scientific methods of research and the scientific habit of thought became more general, so the value of speculative theories of all kinds seemed to diminish and their conclusions became more liable to be discredited. The effect of this movement upon the deeper writings of the Early Fathers has been to banish them from the lists of general well educated readers.

We ought to attribute further weight to another very powerful necessity already touched on which has always worked for the propagation of the literal views, namely, the pressing needs of every age for giving the Gospel message to masses incapable of grasping any but the simplest information. It is not that Christianity came too early in the morning of human existence, but that owing to complex circumstances not yet put right, the mental powers of the great majority have never been so trained as to enable them to contribute anything like their fullest possible quota of assistance to the religious life. So it was in the days of Christ's ministry. Whilst the mental development of the people remained at a low level, men's spiritual faculties were already dwindling from lack of nourishment and guidance. Such were the fields already spiritually ripe and white unto the harvest into which the Apostles and their associates

of the first century were bidden to hurry. And such too has been the condition of the varied civilised spheres into which their successors have gone ever since. At the present time they are facing hindrances vastly increased by the mingled effect of crass ignorance in one house and misinterpreted knowledge in the next.

This very brief outline of events carries us up to the hour in the nineteenth century when the discoveries of science began to destroy all faith in the literal interpretation of the Fall. And great indeed was the shock. For, as we have seen, this simple belief had become by far the most generally accepted. Indeed, deeper views had almost passed out of sight altogether, at any rate for the laity. Such were the conditions under which a pressing need arose for a new and true explanation of the Fall-story. In the opening chapter we have already alluded to what then happened. From our more advantageous outlook of to-day, it seems clear that the best course would have been an immediate return for counsel and guidance to the views held by the deeper thinkers of earliest Christian times, such as St. Paul, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Fathers who followed up their lines of teaching. With the aid of their mental background and illumined ideas, a deeper insight into the significance of the new evolutional facts might have been gained. But the pressure and needs of those disquieting years led, as we have seen, to the promulgation of hasty and inaccurate views.

It would be well to note before passing on, that the facts briefly stated in the above short historical survey are not ordinary matters of small importance. They are critical points in the spiritual history of mankind at which the most advanced races have been very deeply affected in their most vital powers. For the above facts lay before us the actual steps by which the great majority of Christians have been side-tracked for centuries from the truth about the Fall. Owing to the causes mentioned they have been given incorrect ideas, often hopelessly inadequate to satisfy their intelligence. Our brief survey has shown us the brewing of those clouds of confused thought which for centuries have been hovering upon the horizon, and have now settled down so closely upon our spiritual outlook and powers of faith. And herein we see in growth and in operation those most fertile causes of the world's unrest and wanderings from the lines of sound living, prosperity and happiness.

The net result of the facts reviewed in the preceding chapters is to show that we have yet to arrive at the real meaning of the Fall. The inadequacy of both the literal and evolutionary explanations of the story leaves us with practically only one direction in which to seek the truth, namely, in the possibility that the Fall-story refers to a spiritual failure which occurred before bodily life of any kind began on this planet.

Owing to the obscuring influences already touched on, this fact will meet with opposition in some quarters both from worldly and religious people.

To many the idea will be new and unfamiliar, and will therefore seem untrue. To those guided by a pleasure-seeking materialism its profound seriousness and realism will prove distasteful. To many Christians previously content with obscured notions, these views may be chiefly suggestive of mere pagan speculation. But we shall do well to recognise clearly at the outset that such initial difficulties, both the unfamiliarity and the prejudice, are not the results of accurate knowledge of the subject in the past, but of erroneous and obscured ideas upon which science has recently let in the light. Whereas the untrue views we are leaving behind were obviously forced into existence by the exigencies of immature knowledge and thought, a pre-organic Fall comes to us as the explanation towards which the greatest minds of all ages have been spontaneously directed. Under these conditions the prospect of being led to the truth by this road is so good that we shall refuse to be put off it by the fanciful and unwarrantable speculations which were showered upon its track both by pagan and Christian thinkers of olden times. We shall thrust all such hindrances aside and press on with our search, realising that these obstacles were originally genuine efforts at advance which were rendered nugatory and detrimental by lack of facts and by inaccurate thought.

Before pursuing the subject further, it is necessary to state in what sense the term "pre-organic" is used. It implies that the Fall occurred before organic

evolution began. The word is used in preference to "premundane," "pre-bodily," "pre-earthly," "extra-temporal," "prenatal," or any other term, for two reasons. For the sake of accuracy, since the adjective connotes exactly what facts seem to prove. The evidence at our disposal does not show that the Fall occurred before this planet came into existence, but only before the beginning of the organic process. Also because the adoption of this distinctive term has the most necessary advantage of dissociating the present views from any participation whatever in the unwarrantable extraneous speculations which have become attached to former theories. Some of these theories may have stood and indeed did stand upon the same great basilar fact of a Fall from a pre-existing state higher than bodily life. But the speculations which were built upon this apparently true foundation were themselves untrue. In the case of pagans, they were not even in part substantiated by physical facts. In the case of Christians, in addition to this defect, they were by no means always loyal expansions of the central truths given in Scripture. From such an unfortunate mingling of fiction with vital truth what result could be forthcoming except the more complete obscuration of the entire subject? But if the true meaning of the Fall must necessarily be followed up in the face of obstacles caused by centuries of obscured teaching, the forces on the side of the truth are far more powerful. In addition to the help of the deeper views of Christian teachers, the present age possesses

physical evidence of the truth which cannot for long remain unrecognised.

The central point of the subject now comes more fully into the foreground. It is the question whether the Fall took place before the earthly system of bodily life originated or not? It has been said that this point is unimportant, since it merely puts the origin of evil back a stage into a pre-bodily life, and therefore so far as man is concerned it is uninforming. It would be difficult to imagine a more misleading comment than this. The bare question as to whether the Fall occurred before or after organic evolution began gives no indication whatever of the stupendous consequences and deductions to which it leads.

To begin with, its answer will tell us whether the Fall was in reality caused by actual rebellion or not. Whether the old belief in the rebellious nature of sin or the new theory of mere immaturity is true. Whether sin by origin and nature was due to a wilful and fully conscious violation of God's laws, or whether it partakes only of the nature of a mere passive deviation from the lines of true progress—a deviation caused by practically unavoidable incompleteness, and therefore without wilful transgression or deadly consequences. If the Fall took place before man's bodily existence, all difficulties regarding the fairness of his trial, and the perfect freedom of his powers of choice between right and wrong entirely disappear. There is every reason for believing that a life higher than the present must afford full scope

for a just and merciful probation. This is exactly what evolutional facts show as necessarily lacking from the supposed probation of primeval earthly man. Again, very important help is to be derived from the determination of such vital points as these : —the justice and probability of penal consequences in the future ;—the reasonableness of the Redemption ;—the real and dire need of sin-stricken humanity for such divine assistance ; the transcendent Love and Mercy of the Incarnation, a Gift involving The Redeemer's entry into a state of existence so terribly ruined and so completely fallen and diseased as an organic process inherently vitiated and sin-stricken in its vital sources. Thus the fact of a pre-organic Fall opens up invaluable aid towards a fuller and clearer understanding of Christian doctrine.

Yet again, with regard to our personal existence, knowledge as to the period when the Fall occurred will tell us whether this bodily life of ours is part of a process of an original spiritual creation, or a veritable re-creation ;—whether by the evolutionary method God is creating a vast series of souls previously non-existent, or whether by means of bodily life He is restoring personalities once belonging to a higher order but now spiritually ruined, bereft of true life and helpless ;—whether by those wonderful kinds of corporate life known as The Church and Christian civilisation, He is fashioning an entirely new joint-existence of beings, or whether by permitting this material existence He is regenerating fallen spirits and uplifting them through the Incarna-

tion into an exalted form of corporate life, which shall hereafter come again into closer communion with Himself.

Now these fundamental questions stand in part answered definitely by Christian doctrine. For it asserts that in the Church mankind is not merely being born to a higher life, but being born *again* ;—born *again* from an altogether fallen condition, into a redeemed, regenerated, unified existence, of which the earthly joint-life of true Christians is only the imperfect embryo. Thus Christian doctrine asserts that the work of the Christian era is not creative but *re*-creative. Moreover, the belief of Christendom has always been that the purpose and work of pre-Christian times, in so far as history records them, were in preparation for the Incarnation and Redemption, and therefore the pre-Christian eras of human life were truly re-creative in aim if not in character. That is to say the Fall preceded them. But what is to be said about the pre-historic and primeval eras, those great periods of bodily and mental development which remained undreamt of by the ordinary mind until science began to raise the curtain but a short century ago ? Obviously before this unveiling, Christianity was unable to publish its teaching upon these facts because they were unknown. But to-day conditions are reversed. Above everything else, the call of the present age upon our religion is to know what it thinks of the facts of human animalism and the selective machinery of evolution, what

illumination upon these subjects lies within the depths of its fundamental beliefs and doctrines.

If we forsake modern speculations such as the evolutionary theory of the Fall and return to the Bible, we shall find that it by no means avoids these subjects, and the lines laid down will assuredly prove to be true. St. Paul more than any other writer is the teacher who deals with them. What then were his opinions ? Did he believe and teach that all periods of life both Christian and pre-Christian aimed at a redemptive, that is to say, a re-creative consummation ? Did he go further than this in believing that the whole bodily order of lower creatures were part of this system, both in process and in purpose ? In other words, did he believe that the Fall took place before any bodily life began ? The answer to these questions can only be derived from a study of the Apostle's writings.

CHAPTER IV

THE EVIDENCE OF ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

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CHAPTER IV

THE EVIDENCE OF ST. PAUL'S EPISTLES

In order to make the remainder of the subject quite clear, let us note exactly where we stand and what extent of the ground has yet to be traversed. Having completed the destructive portion of our work by the disproof of one popular theory and the rejection of two others never seriously accepted, we have reached the constructive stage. In this we shall consider the varied evidence which shows what the truth about the Fall is. As has been already stated, the main truth appears to be that the Fall happened before earthly life began, or possibly simultaneously with its very earliest origins. The diverse evidence proving the truth of this contention will now be examined.

The chief groups or portions of this evidence are derived from three sources. First, from the deeper beliefs and ideas expressed in the earliest Christian teachings. Secondly, from the facts of biology and psychology. Thirdly, from various disconnected facts and lines of reasoning. The above sources contribute a large supply of leading facts definitely pointing to the truth of a pre-organic Fall. These

in turn entail the support of vast groups of subsidiary facts which readily fit in with the theory. Taken together with the various deducible conclusions, the aggregate presents a strength of argument which in the conspicuous absence of contrary evidence approaches to a reasonable proof.

On entering upon the first portion of evidence, let us proceed to examine the writings of St. Paul. A most important essential in this task is to remember that we are seeking for light upon the one single crucial point of information upon which so much depends, namely, whether the Fall preceded organic existence or not. From this subject we must refuse to be side-tracked. If we follow the beaten course and examine the Pauline Epistles with the general view of discovering what the writer's ideas were upon what is now known to us as the doctrine of original sin, our efforts will not assist our present work. We shall find that our labours have been bestowed upon a complexity of issues but not in following up the one crucial line of information about the Fall by which all other facts regarding sin must be affected. In other words, we shall find that although correct methods may have been applied, we have not gone to the author asking his opinion upon the one fundamental truth as to when the Fall occurred and consequently we have come away without any clear and definite idea as to what his conception of the Fall was. The difficulty of arriving at the truth must necessarily be increased by the fear of reading into the sacred words of the Apostle

meanings he might not have intended to express. Nor is the situation relieved by the opposite risk, namely, the danger of losing his message and help through timidity, prejudice, or an unreceptive dulness to the reality, magnitude and wonder of the facts involved.

It will therefore be our object in the next few pages to examine certain passages of St. Paul's writings with a view to ascertaining what his views were as to the period when the Fall occurred. Very few references will be sufficient to show that he believed clearly and definitely that the Fall occurred before organic existence commenced.

To begin with, let us consider Romans viii. 20-24.

"For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who hath subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption, to wit the redemption of our body."

These words contain a plain and definite statement of three connected propositions.

Firstly, St. Paul asserts that the living world is one system. It is one in its bondage to material corruption. In its hope and aim, it is one. In its

corporate pain, in the duration of its waiting and travail "up till the present moment," it is one. In its expected consummation, it is one. No words could more fully assert the unity and integrity of the organic system. *Secondly*, he states that this one living system has one great aim and purpose behind it. *Thirdly*, he declares that this one purpose is the complete redemption of humanity in body as well as in soul.

Now it is certain that the redemption spoken of was only made necessary by the Fall. Therefore the Fall must have preceded the purpose of the Redemption. But the Redemption is said to be the purpose of the living system. Hence the Fall must have occurred before this bodily system began.

It cannot be objected that the original purpose of the organic system was creation and not redemption, and that St. Paul intended to allude to this, for his words contain an entirely opposite statement. Moreover, such a supposition would necessitate postulating some kind of an unknown Fall of retrospective penalty reaching the lower creation, and reading this hypothetical issue somehow into the Apostle's words. A writer of such mental calibre as St. Paul who speaks of the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain "together until now," obviously alluding to the unity of the organic process, and with equal clearness referring to the oneness of the redemptive consummation in view, can scarcely be accused of meaning something so diametrically opposite as an originally sound creation without any original need

of Redemption, and without that initial all-pervading aim of Redemption which he declares to have been the purpose and hope for which the whole creation was subjected to the travail of bodily existence.

St. Paul's belief in the pre-existence of human souls before the organic process began is rendered evident by the definite expressions contained in the opening verses of his Epistle to the Ephesians. He speaks there of God having chosen us in Christ [1] "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having pre-ordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself." The first fact which this passage brings before us is the definite and persistent purpose which God will be enabled to fulfil with regard to the salvation of a certain portion of humanity who have not made that fulfilment impossible. The second fact is that these souls were "chosen" or "foreordained" before the foundation of the world. Thus not only is the pre-existence of souls accepted as true, but also the pre-existence of the Fall, which caused some souls to be imperfect and therefore not "chosen," in fact rejected.

If we understand St. Paul's words as only meaning that before the foundation of the world God ordained a certain system and principle which should work out the salvation of souls through Christ, effecting the spiritual perfection and selection of all capable of receiving it, and the rejection of others, the pre-existence both of the souls and of the Fall is still

[1] Ephesians i. 4-8.

implied. Otherwise the idea of choosing, entailing the facts of rejection and imperfection, would be without meaning or reason. Moreover, St. Paul's firm belief that God desires the salvation of all men cannot be reconciled with the rejection of some without the fact of a pre-existing Fall as the cause of their rejection. The verses which follow give access to the writer's thoughts and make the whole passage clear. For St. Paul goes on at once to mention "our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace." Thus it becomes evident that God's purpose to which he has just alluded was not a plan for an original sinless creation of unfallen beings, but a merciful design for the redemption and restoration of souls already fallen before the foundation of the world itself. The stupendous breadth of these views is characteristic of the Apostle's powers of following the lead of his inspiration beyond the easy limits of earth-bound thought. Thus we find his teaching opening up the narrowed horizon of human thought to admit visions of the boundless past, then leading naturally to a dim illumination of the inspiring future. Of this future, with its great hope of the consummation of all things in Christ, St. Paul proceeds to speak.

It concerns our ideas and interpretation of the verses in question to know what St. Paul meant by speaking of souls having been "chosen" and "foreordained" in extra-temporal or pre-mundane conditions. He certainly did not mean that any souls

were predestinated or condemned by God to any kind of loss or failure. On the contrary his doctrine was that [1] "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." The context seems to show that the predestination in the mind of St. Paul was God's special purpose and plan for each soul's perfecting. Such a divine ordering would depend upon God's knowledge of each soul's status. In the case of those mentioned as "chosen," their spiritual condition and past record would have afforded Him assured promise of their future advance and capacity for higher service to others, as far as divine fore-knowledge of man's free-willed conduct can exist. Thus St. Paul was referring to God's complete knowledge of the unknown past of each individual's soul-history with the spiritual results attained, and the consequent possibility of His subsequent plans for their advancement. Thus the "choosing" and "foreordaining" was no matter of arbitrary favouritism on the part of God, but the operation of unchanging principles, with God's own endorsement of the spiritual results thus worked out under the orderly justice of His laws. Nevertheless the selection and rejection would be real. Some by God's grace, through their attainments would be able to advance to higher life. They would be truly chosen and predestinated for further progress. But for others the remaining journey would be different, unavoidably longer, and its final results more indistinct, and even dark. Commenting upon

[1] 1 Timothy ii. 4.

St. Paul's views as shown in these passages, Dr. Gore remarks: [1] "It is not out of place to notice in this connexion how closely akin is St. Paul's thought to the modern philosophy of evolution. Only to St. Paul the slow process of cosmic or human evolution is in no kind of opposition to the idea of divine design."

With regard to the Apostle's views as to the pre-organic occurrence of the Fall, they again become very distinct in Col. i. 20. Here he states that it is God's purpose through Christ "to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace through the blood of his cross; through him, I say, whether things upon the earth or things in the heavens." The reconciliation of "all things" implies a previous estrangement, that is to say, the destruction of a pre-existing peace and harmony. It implies the breaking up of a unity which had once existed, necessitating the previous occurrence of a spiritual Fall, obviously pre-organic. Both the above statements contain clear and definite references to the point at issue. It cannot be supposed that these are vague, meaningless allusions. On the contrary, they contain obviously intentional teaching upon a very important subject.

The same facts are reiterated in slightly different language in 2 Cor. v. 19. "God was in Christ reconciling the world [2] unto himself." In the last two passages the vast extent and profundity of the "reconciliation" needed is most striking. In the one passage "all things," not man only, need reconciliation. In the other not man alone, but

[1] *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, p. 69. [2] Or "a world."

"the world" needs this transforming change. Both phrases alike imply that the preceding Fall entailed a disintegration of vast proportions. It would be as impossible to attribute such a stupendous disintegration to the limited cause of some post-evolutional failure of moral power as postulated by the evolutionary theory of the Fall, as it would be to revert to the causal efficacy of the eaten fruit. We perceive that the disintegration was of an entire system of spiritual life and being which had pre-existed. And so the "reconciling" mentioned is clearly the regeneration and reconstitution of the spiritual unity of the original life as ordained and created by God, a life in which the original, flawless, holy nature of each soul produced a blessed and complete oneness of life and love in close communion with God Himself.

Such was the transcendent nature of the spiritual unity or joint life broken up by the entrance of sin. Such the glory of the reconciliation or restored unity towards which the Apostle bids his converts to lift up their powers of prayer, of faith and understanding. Thus for St. Paul, behind the great doctrines of the Redemption and At-one-ment stood the background not of some indistinct minor disaster of doubtful occurrence and little importance, but the dark overhanging cloud of a spiritual ruin only too terribly real and actual. A ruin which had not merely involved the once sinless sons of God in the depths of mortal existence, but in a bondage wherein the inherent evil remained a naturally irredeemable and self-propagating element. Of his own powers man

must for ever remain impotent to rise above the level of an unredeemed animality, not because the source of the deadly sin was inherent in matter as matter, but because the spiritual and vital element within the living system was vitiated and fallen before organic origins. And since the fatal power and disease of sin was spiritual in its origin and nature, so the organic system from end to end including human life was sin-stricken from its start. The "world" in the very widest sense, "all things," were involved in the resulting evil effects of the Fall. Nothing in the living world was free, nothing exempt except the Redeemer Himself.

Of evidence of these facts there was no lack. The testimony of scripture, of history and daily experience could be invoked as witness to the endless vagaries of human life due to the vitiation of an inherent tendency to evil. The enmity of sin, like the persisting and inevitable claims of a written law, was by nature against all humanity. Its power still pressed on every moment to compass the spiritual death of each individual, in contest against the saving power of Christ. It is evident that in the background of the Apostle's mind stood the certain knowledge of a Fall, real, beyond all doubt. A Fall whose disastrous results were for him neither obscured by erroneous theories nor limited to human life by a fictitious boundary. But a Fall as testified by the great mass of the facts of bodily existence, clearly unveiled in their deadly danger by revealed truth. A Fall whose wreckage from every era of its struggle

and every quarter of its organic life lay all around him in one system of bodily existence, still groaning in its imperfection and pain. Still bearing in its physical structures throughout its organic unity the penal effects of a vital energy sin-stricken in its spiritual depths. Thus in the unlimited extent of these results of the Fall we find the explanation of the above expressions by which St. Paul describes the magnitude of the transformation to be wrought out through the redemptive Grace of Christ.

Thus far it will be recognised, that whereas a pre-organic Fall corresponds exactly both with his expressions and ideas, no other theory of the Fall will coincide with either. Moreover it is worth noting that in spite of the stupendous scope and magnitude of his views they are remarkably definite and clear. The language in which they are conveyed is conspicuously free from ambiguity, vagueness or inconsistency, forcing us to realise the contrast between the revelation of God's truth, and the subsequent vagaries of human speculation.

Again, St. Paul's belief in a pre-organic Fall becomes evident from his repeated allusions to sin radically inherent in the human body as well as in the spirit. The reason being, that he understands that the structure of the body is in a measure due to the nature of the fallen spiritual element. It is obvious from such expressions as [1] "sinful flesh," [2] "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing," and [3] "Who shall

[1] Rom. viii. 3. [2] Rom. vii. 18. [3] Rom. vii. 24.

deliver me out of this body of death," that the fact which has impressed its importance upon the writer's mind and which he is anxious to impress upon others, is that the disease of sin which has gained possession of the human spirit has become embodied as a dominant principle in the formation of some parts of his bodily structure. So that although the spirit and mind may be won to God and delight in holiness, the evil principles embodied in the instinctive mechanisms war against the laws of holiness, and tend to enforce subservience to their dictates. St. Paul's words are as follows: [1] "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members." In other words, the sinfulness of the fallen life has become embodied in my physical organism.

Three times in these passages reference is made to a "law of sin," alluding to the abstract principles of evil which are actually embodied in the structures of the human organism. The allusion evidently includes what are known to-day as the mechanisms of the primary instincts. If these are not evil in themselves, they are sinful by virtue of being physical structures by design, build and development, out of the control of the higher centres and spiritual faculties, and so often of opposing tendency. From organic origins the development of these structures has never been free from the effect of a non-

[1] Rom. vii. 22.

moral and later immoral factor, namely, a vitiated vital energy. The source of the evil no more resides in the matter of these bodily structures than evil exists in the substance of the metal of a time-bomb in an assassin's hand. Evil may correctly be said to be embodied in its purpose, its design and mechanism. Especially since in this case the psychological element is supplied by the close connection with the living owner who may intend to give full effect to its destructive power. But in the case of the instinctive mechanism of the body, the living central controlling element exists in inherent vital connection with the mechanism itself, investing the whole structure with the psychological element necessary to sin and evil.

Another passage revealing the same recognition of sin embodied in the human organism, as well as inherent in the spirit which should be able to control it, is: [1] "For apart from the law sin is dead. And I was alive apart from the law once; but when the commandment came sin revived and I died." In the sentence "I was alive apart from the law once," St. Paul is not speaking of his own life but identifying himself with man in his past, moral history. He points out that before the moral law was given, mankind followed their instincts unrestrained by such influences. But when the moral law with its "thou shalt not" came, the warfare began. Then the true nature of man's spiritual depths became manifest. For an inner opposition to the higher will arose, and intensified by instinctive

[1] Rom. vii. 8-10 (*vide* Dr. Gore's *Epistle to Rom.* vol. i. chap. vii.).

factors, broke through the law, reproducing the deadly effects of the Fall. "Sin revived, and I died." But why did St. Paul choose specially a compound Greek word here, meaning not that sin came to life, but that it came to life *again*? Why not, sin "arose" or "was produced"? Thus he expressly does not say that sin came into being in each life in this way, but that it thus came into being *again*. This is but one more instance of his clear recognition of an evil element inherent in the spiritual depths of human vitality which he closely connects with the bodily developments it has led to. In the above passage the Apostle plainly asserts that the non-moral will-power which dominated the instinct-ridden past only needed the stimulating opposition of the moral law to cause it to burst again into the fully conscious rebellion of sinfulness. But these bygone periods of human life extend unbroken into the eras of animalism. Of this St. Paul was well aware, as his plain reference to the unity of the organic world[1] shows. Thus his recognition of an element of evil present throughout the living system becomes again obvious. But such evil necessitates a pre-organic Fall. As far as the condition of mankind is concerned, the deeper he looks into its inward state the more fully he seems to recognise an inherent sinfulness, normally ready to revive and live again and rehabilitate its fallen nature.[2] From the deeps of his own life whence he

[1] Rom. viii. 18-24.

[2] These facts bring the remote pre-organic Fall into closest vital connection with the spiritual contests of the present hour.

would fain look for strength to side with the dictates of inspired ideals, he finds nothing, only that which, if unaided from above, tends to death. Thus the picture of humanity he outlines by no means speaks of the moral weakness of a passing immaturity, but of a sin-stricken state of being which no natural power can raise from its spiritual impotence.

Obviously the allusion to sin as "dead" before knowledge and wilful choice completes its actual guilt, is a reference to the afore-mentioned sinful tendencies and self-centred principles embodied in the human organism. Their action, at first more or less mechanical, later becomes conscious. But the individual himself is still unaware both of the moral law and his own pernicious lack of moral restraint. In this stage evil results are produced, but the embodied sin is "dead" because moral consciousness is lacking. With further development, moral knowledge converts the potential sin of dominating instinct-structure into actual guilt, and the will, ineffectual to control it, is made weaker, until its authority dies. Commenting on this passage Dr. Tennant writes:[1] St. Paul "seems to imply that sin is in man before the consciousness of the law arrives to constitute its guilt. As Ritschl has said, St. Paul held that man is not sinful because he commits sins, but commits sins because he is sinful. But why he is sinful the apostle nowhere explains. The tracing of sin back to Adam's fall as its historical beginning does not solve the question."

[1] *The Fall and Original Sin*, Dr. Tennant, p. 269.

Now our special question is, in what light did St. Paul regard this deep-seated tendency to lawless sin, this uncontrolled response to stimulus not only in the human spirit but embodied in the structure of his physical organisation as well? It is quite certain he did not attribute the sinful law in his members to any purely material cause or origin. It is equally certain from his words that he was aware that it was not due to any superficial, temporary, or slight vitiation or curable disorder. The very force of his expressions quoted impart their actual meaning. They carry us right back behind the sin-stricken organic process to a vital impulse or spiritual energy itself vitiated and ruined by sin. What else could be the meaning of his words, "we were by nature children of wrath even as the rest." The word translated "by nature" does not refer to hereditary influence, it goes back to physical origins. It means, we were from bodily origin children of wrath, that is to say, sin-stricken. In other words the spiritual energy of life was fallen and vitiated before its bodily existence began. Therefore the resulting bodily organism is also sin-stricken not being completely fashioned according to the domination of principles of righteousness and truth. Therefore, also, the resulting bodily beings are by nature children of wrath given over to sin in body and soul. The spiritual energy of life has not become essentially changed by being embodied. On the contrary the body it has helped to vitalise and evolve is but a manifestation of its own nature. Thus the fallen

vital energy has come to embody in its primary instinctive structures the very evil self-centred principles which belong to its own fallen nature, and which must inevitably reproduce their own evils. Of the sinful principles thus inherently embodied in the structure of the natural body, and of the spiritual sources of this sinfulness St. Paul was ever conscious. He writes: [1] "The law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." A more notable allusion to the same underlying facts of the human body is: [2] "Him Who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." The fact that the sinless Person of the Word of God took upon Himself the sin-vitiated bodily organism of man scarcely seems of itself to justify the strength of the expression "made Him to be sin." But when we remember the vitiated instinctive structures of the normal human body, we fully recognise that the sinless Redeemer in the closeness of His association with this instrument of humiliation and with the principles embodied therein, was in a terrible and real sense "made to be sin."

It will be unnecessary to adduce further, similar passages reflecting St. Paul's consciousness of inherent sin throughout the whole living world, and hence also of a pre-organic Fall.

An exception, however, must be made by referring to the following much-discussed passage which has a direct bearing upon our question. St. Paul's words

[1] Rom. vii. 14. [2] 2 Cor. v. 21.

in Romans v. 12 are, "Therefore as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, because all sinned." After many years of controversy modern opinion prefers to accept the literal meaning of the Apostle's words to reading into them some theological hypothesis. Dr. Bruce is apparently in agreement with the great majority of critics in remarking: [1] "We seem therefore to be thrown back, in spite of ourselves, on the thought, however strange it may seem, that when Adam sinned all mankind sinned, as that which the Apostle intended to utter." The Greek aorist translated sinned specifies a definite action performed at a definite time and cannot be supposed to refer to the future sinning of men owing to inherited tendencies from Adam.

Dr. Bruce refers to a noteworthy explanation given by Pfleiderer in the first edition of his able work on Paulinism but afterwards revoked in favour of a groundless notion.

Pfleiderer remarks [2] "That two different reasons seem to be given for the entrance of death—Adam's sin and men's own sin, and it may seem strange that no attempt should be made to reconcile the two." But he goes on to say, "Just in this hard and completely unreconciled juxtaposition of the two reasons lies without doubt the hint that in the Apostle's view they are not two but one, that therefore the sinful deed of Adam is at the same time, and as

[1] *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, Dr. Bruce, p. 131.

[2] *St. Paul's Conception of Christianity*, p. 131.

such the sinful deed of all." "This," he continues, "naturally must mean, that in the deed of Adam, as the representative head of the race, the race in virtue of a certain moral or mystic identity took part."

With these expressions Dr. Tennant's conclusions agree in so far as they are positive. After a careful examination of the passage extending over some thirteen pages he observes: [2] "It is, of course, quite impossible to arrive at objective certainty as to what St. Paul's exact meaning was. But of those views which have now been discussed, that which regards St. Paul as having clothed the current notion of Adam as the cause of human death, and the root of human sin, in the language of his peculiar 'mystical realism' would seem to be the best grounded. If this be so, his doctrine of The Fall must be regarded as widely different from that which was destined to become general in the Christian Church."

Here, our special investigation suggests the question as to what was the actual belief in the Apostle's mind behind this language of 'mystical realism'? Obviously, a definite belief in a pre-organic Fall. The obscure character of his language is not due to doubt, caprice, or a desire to conceal, but is necessitated by the twofold nature of the subject dealt with. It is not a mere subjective "style of thought," or an inaccurate mode of expression. Its realism is not "only figurative," but intended to convey a knowledge of actual facts of

[2] *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, Tennant, pp. 54-79.

profound importance. The language is unavoidable. For since one side of the subject referring to the original life in Paradise involves the transcendence of the extra-temporal existence, the shadowy element and figures of mysticism cannot be excluded. Since the other side refers to facts of our present bodily life in their most vital realities, the realism is enforced and is of the utmost objective solidity.

It would seem, then, that the clue also to the meaning of Rom. v. 12-20 is to be found in St. Paul's belief in a pre-organic Fall. In this case Adam, the former inhabitant of Paradise, stands for the whole order of unfallen souls who shared in that exalted life. When he, the head of that sacred existence, sinned, other members wilfully took part in the rebellion and shared in the sin. Thus death as an inevitable consequence became the lot of all who sinned. Not only the spiritual death causing the lapse from the higher life, but also the physical death inseparable from the ensuing organic existence. "And so death passed unto all men, because all sinned."

This explanation, which is supported by evidence from many quarters, seems to be opposed by no solid objections. On the other hand, it completely removes the well-known antinomy which otherwise constitutes a most serious obstacle to the Christian doctrine of sin, namely, the difficulty that the Bible affirms both the fact of universal sin and also of personal guilt. That is to say, it maintains that sin is universally inherent in all individuals, being due

to Adam's fall; but that at the same time it is due also to the personal guilt of each individual soul. It is now generally admitted that this apparent contradiction finds a reasonable and final solution only in the hypothesis of some kind of an extra-temporal Fall. Upon this subject Dr. Julius Müller makes the following lucid remarks:

[1] "The contradiction between sin's universality and its guilt, as arising from an act of will, disappears if each one who in this life is tainted by sin has in a life beyond the bounds of time wilfully turned away from the divine light to the darkness of self-absorbed selfishness. And thus, too, we may regard the bias of evil in many according to the Kantian phraseology as 'interwoven with humanity and deep-rooted therein' and at the same time as caused by ourselves. . . ." Consequently "moral consciousness no sooner awakes than it finds our lives already at variance with its holy law—this variance being man's state of nature—and yet in spite of the universality and seeming necessity of this state, it condemns us as personally accountable."

Let us now return to consider the passage Romans v. 12-20 from another standpoint. It might perhaps be regarded as evidence that the Apostle believed in the actual historical existence of Adam, and also in the literal truth of his fatal sin during his bodily life in the Garden of Eden. Apparently views of this kind would be based upon such phrases as this—

[1] *The Christian Doctrine of Sin*, J. Müller, vol. ii. pp. 359, 360.

"as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin";—"and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." There are also allusions to "the trespass of one man," "the disobedience of one man." Also another mention of Adam occurs as follows,—"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come."

Surely, it might be argued, St. Paul here gives definite proof of his belief in a historical Adam. But this supposition becomes destroyed directly we ask, about whom was St. Paul teaching, and with what aim and purpose did he thus constantly refer to Adam? His aim was clearly not to teach about Adam but about Jesus Christ. It is quite true to say that he mentions Adam and his one sin, but only by way of making his instruction about Christ and the coming spread of the regenerated life of grace easier to grip. It is true that all were familiar with the Fall-story and its figures, and hence it possessed a unique value as a means for conveying new teaching. But this is only half the truth. For if St. Paul desired to teach the facts of the Redemption what else could he ground it upon other than the facts of the Fall? And if he himself possessed deeper beliefs regarding the Fall than the mere literal meaning of the story of Genesis, could he possibly start by teaching them to people not only ignorant of the very rudiments of the subject, but

usually incapable of understanding them? On the other hand, the Fall-story understood literally gave the truth exactly, and in the simple form his audience required. Thus St. Paul evidently used the Fall-story in teaching for the same reasons as nearly all Christian teachers ever since, until the spread of evolutionary knowledge created the need for increased light.

But it would be a gross error to imagine that all those who in bygone days humbly accepted the imagery of the Fall-story and taught it, believed themselves that it contained historical facts. Least of all, surely, should this charge be laid against the intellect of St. Paul, merely because as a teacher of the simple he himself became simple. But if there should still be grave doubts upon the matter, the most final proof is to be derived not from the few passages such as this in which he is obviously making use of ancient and superficial teaching-material for ulterior instruction, but from such deeper passages as those already quoted. In these deeper passages he is unveiling his inner beliefs, and directly imparting new and deeper knowledge, knowledge which was revealed to him, and which became the basis of his inspired understanding, knowledge which his writings pass on for the mental illumination of all periods.

Doubtless the use of the Fall-story language in biblical times would generally imply belief in its historical truth. Yet with the more intellectual

speakers it is always possible and often probable that such use might have been on occasion nothing more than the adoption of customary figures of speech entailing no belief in their literal truth. However this may be in the case of other writers, it would be impossible to limit St. Paul's language to a meaning of narrow literalism, because both the profound depth and boundless breadth of his outlook and his expressions compel us to accompany him very far beyond it. In short, we have no more reasonable grounds for imagining that St. Paul believed in the literal truth of the Fall-language which he so often used to convey spiritual teaching, than we have for supposing that a person who speaks to-day of the sun rising is committing himself to the astronomical untruth which his language actually utters.

Surely Dr. Tennant lost sight of the whole chain of contrary evidence as well as of the wonderful mental powers of St. Paul, to say nothing of his inspired gifts and mission, when he asserted that the Apostle believed in a historical Adam, and remarked, " I do not wish to confuse the plain issue that St. Paul like his contemporaries seems to have believed in a historical Adam from whom the human race derives its woes."

Such a statement seems to assume that all his contemporaries held this belief, which is assuredly untrue. Did he meet with no deeper views from his teachers and fellow-students at Tarsus, or from the Greek thought and philosophy with which he was

certainly acquainted? In Palestine and elsewhere did his alert and vigorous brain find no critical ideas causing him to doubt the literal truth of the sin of Eden? Did the period which a few years later ripened the thoughts of Philo Judaeus fail to offer St. Paul even sufficient mental stimulus to lead him beyond the child-language of Genesis? Did the Revelation of his Lord and Master, and his subsequent years of secluded prayer and thought bring no further illumination to his brilliant intellect than a firm and satisfied belief in those impossible and narrowing ideas about the Fall-story which science has shown to be entirely false? Finally, the error of limiting St. Paul's ideas to a literal view of the Fall-story may be judged from the impossibility of really explaining many of his phrases and ideas upon such a basis, an impossibility of which Dr. Tennant himself appears to be fully conscious, judging from his verdict quoted on page 79. Dr. Gore is standing upon the far more solid ground of truth in observing: [1] "I can never imagine how people so long supposed that these early chapters were a historical record of actual events as they occurred." If this be true of ordinary intelligent individuals, it would indeed be an act of violation to attempt to confine the mind of St. Paul within such an arbitrary and contracted boundary;—a mind which could receive and encompass such a limitless conception as the summing up of all things in Christ, when as yet Christianity offered but little

[1] *Sermon on the Fall*, p. 7.

external aid towards such inspired knowledge, being outwardly but a scarcely visible germ.

St. Paul was not merely one teacher among many similar contemporaries. He stood head and shoulders above them all in his penetrating, orderly and scientific mentality. He was a specially chosen vessel, and his brain of a type not likely to miss the truths in question. It may seem an easy matter to refute the pre-organic theory by attempting to square St. Paul's teaching with literal views of the Fall-story, and by asserting that such were his beliefs. But such an assertion would be contrary to the above facts. Moreover, it could only be justified by overthrowing the evidence adduced in these chapters by other explanations amounting to disproof of the above.

Amidst these considerations let us ask finally, what possible belief regarding the Fall will coincide with St. Paul's language and teaching except a pre-organic Fall, which at once removes all difficulties? We cannot attribute a literal belief in the Fall-story to this Apostle. An evolutionary Fall is equally impossible. On the other hand, if St. Paul believed in a pre-organic Fall, he gives just the information required to-day to bring the new evolutionary facts into their correct and harmonious relationship with the great doctrines of Christianity. And he gives it with such a remarkably light-handed clearness and conciseness that we can scarcely doubt that among his many other appointed tasks he was a chosen instrument for this very purpose. Moreover,

this supposition gives a satisfactory key to his difficult sayings. He stated definitely that for spiritual reasons he did not consider it advisable to put forward the intellectual side of doctrines to ordinary hearers, since the Gospel of the Cross of Christ alone supplied the seed to be sown, and since the ground in which it was finally to take root was the heart rather than the head. Therefore he writes: [1] "And my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." He then proceeds to explain for the sake of those who might be sufficiently advanced spiritually to need the information: "Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect." Adding: [2] "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not able to bear it." In short, he finds that whereas the simple gospel message is needed and suitable everywhere, the deeper teaching is of service only to those more advanced both spiritually and mentally.

None will realise more clearly than those who have had experience of spiritual work that the above passages give the reasons why St. Paul did not enter more fully into the deeper truths which lay beneath the Fall-story. It was not because his own mind had not penetrated beneath the superficial language, but because there was then no general demand for any

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 4. [2] 1 Cor. iii. 1.

revelation of deeper truths. The exceptional "perfect," as he tells us in the words quoted above, received the guidance they required. Nor until the veil became partially lifted by evolutionary knowledge did these conditions really change. The whole of this passage, with its contrast between the simplicity of the essential teachings and the profound yet intelligible underlying mysteries, is a revelation of the Apostle's mind. No superficial views of the Fall and Christianity will fit in with such language, for it definitely proclaims existing deeps.

It may, however, be objected, that although through St. Paul we receive the basis of the pre-organic interpretation of the Fall-story from a Christian source, yet the great fundamental truths and the main outlines of the story in which they are enshrined originally came from pagan thinkers. According to the most reliable authorities this view is not in accordance with the evidence available. But if it were correct it would create no difficulty to Christian belief. Since it is true that Christianity has always shared parts of the Fall-story with pagans, there can be nothing but joy in also sharing with them the meaning of the story wherever we may be able to stand together as believers of the truth. Moreover, it is quite certain that no truth of any kind can be in any way diminished in value by having been first recognised by individuals who prayed for and sought the light without having received the aid of Christian faith and knowledge.

If in this particular case heathen seekers after truth in different lands have been led to the true facts regarding the past of the human soul-life, the facts only become on this account the more credible. For whatever may be the direct or tortuous channels through which the truth reaches mankind, its source is known to be God and its revelation the work of His Spirit. And if there is one piece of knowledge which reason tells us the quickening Spirit of God would have tried to re-awaken into consciousness in all mankind in the earliest periods possible, it is the fact of the Fall. For it is a piece of knowledge which above all others contributes most to man's primary understanding of his mortal existence. No other truth can possess the same power of shedding light upon those dark problems and pathetic facts of life which the unguided must dwell upon in hopeless sorrow, or misinterpret as part of an aimless martyrdom of man. Again, no other truth so completely vindicates God's love and just dealing towards His creatures, and no other so wonderfully consummates its power and authority by leading so clearly to the unimaginable facts of the Redemption. Thus transforming a woeful tragedy of sin and death into the glad song of The Redeemer's love.

Moreover, let us carefully note that the revelation of so important and fundamental a truth to pagan seekers by no means stands alone. It is but one of many instances of what has been called *derived knowledge*.[1] That is to say, knowledge which, like

[1] *Essays Scientific and Philosophical*, Canon A. L. Moore, p. 232 *et seq.*

the first principles of logic, law, science and all abstract truth, began to come through to mankind as inspirations given in the morning of man's birth. What does not man owe in all other subjects to similar fundamental items of derived knowledge imparted to inspired individuals, who being so gifted, were enabled to bring gifts to men ? Therefore in this matter of the fact and nature of the Fall, we may well ask whether the spiritual understanding and lead of bygone ages may not rightly be credited with possessing fragments of vital truth—truth shared in greater measure and more fully understood by Christians.

A careful consideration of the above facts will cause us to realise that St. Paul's language, being that of a trained scholar, is unlikely to contain misleading words or phrases. We recall the fact that the writer's mind was quickened and illuminated by the Holy Ghost to discern error, to teach, and to lead to the truth. Therefore, although his object is not to give any direct exposition of the Fall, we shall feel confident that all he implies by his statements is true, that the clear and definite facts he states are true, and not, as some imagine, the misleading verbiage of ignorant speculation. Then confining ourselves to that which is certain about the Apostle's views, let us note that whatever doubts may exist regarding his disbelief in a historical Adam, the evidence advanced above shows conclusively that he believed that an element of inherent evil existed within the whole living creation. His belief in this

vitiation will not be disputed, since it has been already recognised from his writings. Such belief in inherent evil existing throughout the living creation obviously of itself necessitates the acceptance of a pre-organic Fall.

CHAPTER V

THE PRE-ORGANIC THEORY

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CHAPTER V

THE PRE-ORGANIC THEORY

It is evident from the facts already adduced that the biological signs of vitiation in primary vital phenomena may turn out to be also traces of a pre-organic Fall. Then let us pass from St. Paul's views to a second source of information, namely, scientific research. From this quarter a vast mass of facts are forthcoming which strongly corroborate St. Paul's doctrine of a vitiation, or evil tendency to imperfection, inherent throughout the whole organic world. It is a vitiation whose symptoms are never absent and cannot be confused with mere immaturity. For its results are worst and most manifestly evil not in the early stages of evolution but in man, the last and most final product. The preliminary outline of biological evidence beginning on page 25 may be useful here as restating in summary the general aspect of the subject we are speaking of.

But it may be objected, that granting the truth of St. Paul's belief in the existence of evil inherent throughout the living creation, and granting the reality of the biological evidence corroborating this

fact, why should the vitiation be attributed to a pre-organic Fall rather than to some injurious *material* causes vitiating the sources of organic origins? This, it might be argued, would be a simpler postulation, less liable to error, and therefore preferable in every way to the more complicated supposition of a pre-organic Fall. Such an explanation might be simpler and plausible, but it would not be true. To attribute a vast set of vital and spiritual results to purely material causes would entail the contradiction of many fundamental truths, and would be a relapse into the fallacies of materialism. The broad statement of the case is that the knowledge of vital vitiation and evil in the world before man's conscious action, provides a proof of the pre-existence of a living will-power in a state of opposition to God. Thus the fact of the evil inherent in vital phenomena so thoroughly attested is in a real sense a proof of a pre-organic Fall. If it is desired to view the subject in connection with the context of biological facts a reference to it will be found from page 114 onwards. Evidence is given there which shows that the source of the vitiation running throughout the living world is to be found in the vital energy. Life, the vital impulse or energy, is now recognised as being a psychological or spiritual force. Therefore, in considering the subject of the vitiating or evil element in evolution, we shall remember that we are dealing with that which is living and spiritual. Moreover, if the vitiating evil element in evolution is spiritual, the true and original cause of its having become so

must inevitably turn out to be spiritual also. When this position has been reached, it will be found that the matter has in reality been narrowed down to one possibility which is some kind of pre-organic sin or Fall. For what alternative view is possible ?

Various theories have been put forward, but none have stood the test of rigorous criticism. We are thus led to the conclusion that the vitiation which is inherent in vital phenomena, and which in such final results as human will-power manifests itself as moral impotence and sin, is due to the vitiation of the psychological element inseparably associated with the vital energy, perhaps identical with it. This we speak of as the will, meaning thereby the dominant spiritual element of a personality. It is evident, therefore, that the source of the vitiation of organic existence is will-power, or vital energy at variance with, and unable and unwilling to correspond with, what we have come to recognise as the will of God. The will of God as understood from moral law down to physical progress in evolution, as recognised also in the first gleams of spiritual light dawning in natural religion, and as plainly revealed by the Spirit of God, especially by means of the Incarnation and Christianity—Christianity with its spirit of divine love, with its aims of human welfare, spiritual regeneration and salvation through Jesus Christ. Although civilised man has come to recognise most of the characteristics of the will of God, he does not find his own natural will in perfect harmony with them. He cannot transform its vital deeps. It is self-centred

and vitiated. It is impotent, and its impotence is never more manifest to himself than in these spiritual matters. What we realise is, that the will, and all that goes to constitute it, is the vital element, the living unit, the personality itself. And we must remember that we cannot separate it from that undying vital energy of whose existence and ceaseless travail the living world gives so many wondrous proofs.

Then the most important conclusion which concerns our subject is that the origin of this vitiation must have started from a spiritual and psychological change in a living will or living wills. In the very nature of things physical causes are powerless to produce such change. The change can only be conceived of as a passing of individual wills into rebellion against God and into deliberate opposition to Him. In no other conceivable manner could this vitiated psychological energy or will-power have originated. The truth is plain also from a biological aspect, for it would be impossible to imagine that God by unfettered choice created an impotent, erratic, vital energy, and sent a defective vital principle to vitalise matter and to produce an imperfect and sin-stricken vital output. But if its defective nature is not directly due to God and is not in harmony with His wish, it must be in part the effect of wills other than God's. That is to say, the plain issues of the subject point to some such causes as the Fall describes.

But this is only part of the truth. For the facts of evolution, both destructive and constructive,

prove that side by side with the impotent efforts of the fallen vitality, another and a more powerful energy has been at work. It is evident how the process has been aided and furthered by the unseen spiritual influences of the Holy Spirit apart from the spiritual results and experiences of regenerate humanity. No less impressive is the testimony of material results as to the formative effects of the wonderful conditioning laws by which the possibilities of growth are hedged in. By these laws, acting chiefly through animal interaction, the inherent vital tendency to erratic, impotent and retrogressive results have been counteracted as by the very hand of God.

If these outlines are approximately true it follows that all living beings which have ever had a normal bodily existence in this world have derived their life and vitality from a vitiated energy. All are fallen. The unspeakable tragedy summed up in these words points to an endless series of imperfect, vitiated beings ceaselessly entering a sin-stricken bodily life. And yet the suffering procession moves towards a glorious Consummation. But if we believe the teaching of Jesus Christ the journey before the human portion is by no means a sure and easy upward passage from the defects of a mere passing immaturity. With this insidious fallacy about lack of development the untrue theory of the Fall has for long drugged the intellect and moral sense of Christendom. The evidence of actual facts seems to agree with that of Calvary, namely, that God's almighty powers have been taxed to the utmost to effect a remedy

for the Fall. Thus we conclude that if there had been no Fall, there would have been no imperfect bodily life, and possibly no bodily life at all, or only an incomparably higher one. The ceaseless struggles and travail of the whole organic world in all periods have been due to the vital energy which became thrust by sin into conditions from which the fallen material existence and its woes offer the merciful, one and only chance of release, redemption and restoration.

In these truths will be found the fullest possible justification and explanation of all pain, animal and human. The life which is in travail now is the life which wilfully cast away its more perfect state of existence. The bodily beings in pain and suffering now, it matters not whether they be birds dying from cold and hunger, or animals burned by the thousand in a prairie fire, or mankind in bodily or mental agony, one and all are but meeting with results which are unavoidable contingencies in that order of being into which their own vital will-power obstinately chose to descend. Thus the great disaster of the Fall was no nominal catastrophe. Not only did it involve vital energy in conditions whose best outcome would be bodily existence beset as it must be with woe, but its sin deadened the original powers of vitality into the impotence manifested by the earliest types of organic and primary protoplasm. The evidence of this is clear on the physical side. For if on the one hand we have rudimentary protoplasm before us, and on

the other the highest type of manhood, and know for certain that physically the ascent from the one to the other has been an unbroken process, we are bound to conclude that the vital energy of the one is also of the same origin and stock as that of the other; and further than this, that the vital energy beneath its original impotence, contained in a deadened condition, potentialities of the magnificent spiritual powers recreated into being by the God-given influences of an age-long evolution.

But here, in this direction, must be the limit of our enquiry. Our object has been merely to pursue the subject far enough to show the truth of a pre-organic Fall with some degree of clearness. There are many problems which cluster round human life, such as the nature of the soul, and whether the fallen spirit of man rose to its present status by repeated re-incarnations, which are quite beyond our powers to decide. Here, as in the case of the wondrous bodily ascent of man from a unicellular organism, the accomplished result has to be taken as both the proof and the explanation of the fact.

The pre-organic theory does not involve the necessity of re-incarnation, but leaves the problem untouched and undecided. By some system which has ensured a vast and age-long supply of vital energy the human body has been produced. Whether by the re-incarnation of the same units of living energy over and over again remains undetermined. If this question is unanswerable with

regard to the original progressive stages of physical development, it becomes still more so with regard to the spiritual progress of each individual soul entering bodily life. There is no reliable evidence as to whether each birth entails the incarnation of a soul which has never gone through bodily existence on this planet before, or whether it always or sometimes involves reincarnation. On these questions a pre-organic Fall has no bearing whatever.

The pre-organic explanation of the Fall supplies the only perfect theory of original sin showing the unfailing medium of its derivation. For since the vital energy itself is vitiated and fallen, the vitiation has inevitably already passed to every living being. The vitiation entails possessing a life and will-power not perfectly in harmony with God, and not loyal in obedience to His will. Thus the medium by which the original sinfulness is propagated is not bodily only, but also spiritual and vital. A critic might complain of being unaccustomed to regard an insect, bird or animal as fallen. But unless we have missed the lines of the truth, every earthly being lives with a fallen and unsound vitality. Their vital potentialities may be undeveloped, but the life is from the same vitiated source as man's. Apparently man alone is really conscious of his inward vitiation. He feels and knows that he is not by nature "at peace with God." His sense of guilt is common to the race. Yet again, the sinfulness and vitiation is not only derived vitally, but also bodily by heredity. For both instinct-structures and the

brain, especially in the unconscious areas, embody effects of a past of animalism. These speak by the embodied records not of a perfect life, but of a vitality ruined and degraded to a fallen order by the evil nature of the vital energy within.

Having seen that there is a great concurrence of evidence showing that some evil spiritual disaster in the nature of a Fall took place before bodily life began, let us proceed to consider more exactly what such a Fall would consist of and what results it would entail. If the foregoing explanations are in a measure correct, the meaning of the Fall-story would be somewhat as follows. Whatever else may be indistinct in the imagery, it is clear that the beings originally created by God and personified as Adam and Eve are shown as living under conditions totally different from those of bodily life on this planet. Their sphere of existence knew nothing of change or decay, nothing of disease and death, nothing of the ceaseless struggles and warfare essential to the competitive life of the natural order. No description could possibly be more unlike the painful evolutional travail than the Bible picture of the original Paradise. This description not only precludes the slightest idea of the restless, disintegrated, imperfect conditions which are such conspicuous features of organic evolution, but it insists upon a vision of peace, happiness and harmonious unity which we may safely say have never been man's normal lot on earth.

Now these features of the picture are obviously drawn with considered intention. They are far too marked and significant to be without point and meaning. They can only mean one thing, namely, that the beings originally created by God did not exist in the material bodies we live in. They were given an altogether higher and more perfect existence. They belonged to a spiritual order, immeasurably above the material order of our lowly animal life. Theirs could not have been a life of self-centred, competitive discord, but a joint-existence of true unity and love.

Thus the picture of the Paradise of Eden is obviously intended to reveal the truth that God originally gave to His sinless creation an exalted and blessed existence free from all the evils of our fallen life, an existence which transcends all our powers of understanding. The Christian will no more ask to know the details or manner of this unfallen existence, than he will insist upon possessing detailed knowledge of the future blessed life of the redeemed in Christ. It is sufficient to know that it will be a unified existence in which diversity cannot mean discord, imperfection, or lack of love.

But we must get rid of the fallacy that bodily life and its trials are necessary for the existence of virtue and perfect holiness. No doubt bodily life and its material educators are most necessary for the correction and development of imperfect, that is of fallen souls. But we have every reason for believing

that God did not originally create such imperfect beings. We cannot limit God's power by imagining that He was unable[1] to create perfect beings, endowing them with free-will and a holiness if not perfect, at least very far in advance of any condition reached by earthly man. On the other hand, the gift of free-will, necessitating the opportunity of sin and wilful violation of the perfect life, explains why the fallen state must also be an unavoidable possibility. As regards God's power to create holy beings, perfect by origin, the Bible settles the question beyond all doubt. In the Bible the existence of angels, an exalted order of spiritual beings, is referred to in over two hundred passages. Most of the allusions are to the holy angels of God, but mention is also made of evil angels.

In two passages[2] there is definite reference to the fall of such spiritual beings who were by creation holy. Such a fall was a lapse to lower conditions of being, and was the inevitable consequence of their sin. Thus two important facts are established. First, that God can and did create spiritual beings holy by origin, whose first habitation was of an exalted order and not one of bodily life. Secondly, that a fall from such a state is possible and has occurred, obviously owing to the misuse of the gift of free-willed personality.

Again, the view that the Paradise lost by the Fall was an exalted spiritual life is supported by the undoubted fact that the Paradise to be regained will

[1] *Vide* p. 152. [2] 2 Peter ii. 4 and Jude vi.

be a spiritual existence. St. Paul asserts emphatically that a body of flesh and blood could not enter upon the glorious sphere of the future incorruptible life. If the restitution or completed ascent is to be to a glorified *spiritual* life, the Fall was presumably a descent from a somewhat similar *spiritual* condition. Since the former is certain to all who hold the Catholic Faith, there can be no question of understanding the possibility of the latter. On the other hand, those who have no definite belief in Christian doctrine will have learnt from psychical science and modern spiritism to recognise life out of the body as a certainty based upon sufficient evidence. So that the theory of a pre-organic Fall will at any rate not run counter to the facts of ascertained knowledge. When once this meaning of the Fall has been studied and understood, the main facts of human life and Christianity become a lucid story.

The chief issues portrayed by the Fall-story are probably as follows. Owing to wilful sin, which is the transgression of God's spiritual laws, the sin-stricken souls "fell." That is to say, they ceased to correspond with the vital conditions of their spiritual Paradise. Their original God-given perfections no longer remained in being. Their exalted environment became impossible. They died out of the Paradise of their higher existence by the wilful surrender of the vital principles of their joint-life with God. Its harmony of sympathy, love and

holiness was destroyed. Its unspeakable glory was ended. The individual personalities passed out from the presence of their Divine Creator. Upon the cessation of this vital union with God there followed the inevitable dissolution of the corporate or joint-life of the created beings one with another. They were no longer a living unity, no longer one in God. They lapsed into the degenerate conditions of isolated units of vitiated and disintegrated vital energy. Thus not only was the Eden of that blessed spiritual existence closed to them for ever, according to the immutable principles of perfect life and perfect holiness, but their personal spiritual being became vitiated and deadened. It was this deadened but undying energy which passed from the spiritual sphere into association with matter. Using matter as its medium it gave rise to that extraordinary output of vague erratic structures which once proved such a puzzling feature of vital manifestations. Thus the revelations of the Fall carry us directly to organic origins.

By the aid of the body, that marvellous set of living instruments, the vital spiritual element beneath the process of evolution has in man once again become partially conscious of itself, of its past and of its future. Of necessity all the happenings of the great remote past must remain buried in the unbroken silence of that prehistoric night. But when the books of history do open, how very like they read to the records of a fallen race! The summary of the

ages up to Christian times has been given as "a series of bloody battles and treacherous intrigues." And yet in spite of the inherent evil the regenerating grace of God has at length been able so far to assert its saving power. The human soul has to a great extent "come to itself." It has been already restored by Christ towards a partial fulness of its being. In spite of a perverse genius for misunderstanding so many truths which are vital to his welfare, man can now by his inward faculties and highest powers of thought understand many of the great facts of his spiritual environment. In its deepest feelings practically the whole race is God-conscious, that is to say, in a more or less deadened way "remembers" God. The spiritual life of mankind is still alive. The emotions, the feelings and gropings of this life may have given rise to an endless array of erratic religious ideas and practices. Yet those ceremonies always reflect a dim consciousness of the same spiritual truths and issues. Many tell of a sense of sin and remorse, many of an impulse towards amendment not understood, but felt to necessitate pain and sacrifice. Some externals reveal a thirst for worship and prayer. But most universal of all is the "groaning that cannot be uttered." The deep inexpressible inward unrest. The inherent but often unconscious longing for that which is undefinable, for an exceeding great glory which has departed, but yet which still lives within range of the life itself, of which music and the glory of created things sometimes speak. Without hope or share in

this, no human soul can truly remain at rest in peace and contentment. To what more final cause can we trace the unrest of the modern world than to the waning of spiritual powers, to the emptiness and dissatisfaction of souls unnourished by the husks which have become their adopted food.

The views put forward above coincide closely with the most advanced and now most widely accepted evolutionary philosophy. The psychological nature of the vital impulse as demonstrated throughout M. Bergson's *Creative Evolution* is what this explanation of the Fall postulates and verifies by facts. Beyond these points of agreement, our investigations advance to a more exhaustive solution of biological problems, not only showing the progressive features of evolution as parts of a vast process of spiritual re-creation, but explaining also the confusing retrograde phenomena, and finding in the apparently aimless killing and elimination, ordered operations for destroying useless and injurious portions of a defective vital output.

The above brief outline of the Fall and the organic processes with which it is connected, would be incomplete without including the great Consummation which is to be its crown, namely, the completed Redemption through Jesus Christ. St. Paul states that it is the will of God to[1] "sum up all things in Christ." Although the great operations are beneath the surface where the seed grows secretly, many

[1] Ephesians i. 10.

to-day are becoming more and more conscious of the solidarity of the human race, fallen and disintegrated though it be. Christians especially are becoming more conscious of the spiritual unity of their own Body of which Christ is the Head. Here the basis of the unity is no mere material oneness of worldly interests and ties, which may leave both races and individuals essentially at variance in all that belongs to the higher life, but it is the true oneness of regenerate beings redeemed into an order above the natural. Every century now beholds this new-born spiritual unity in all its reality becoming more and more visible. May it not be recognised as the oncoming power of the great Consummation, however distant its completion? The Spirit of Christianity is slowly but surely bringing about the unification of the human race. Nothing but sin and ignorance is delaying its progress. A missionary circular which lies upon this table distinctly visualises the following aims: "The transformation of all life everywhere by the power of the Holy Spirit; the reconstruction of human society in the spirit of Christianity; the brotherhood of all nations; the fellowship of all classes; the enfranchisement and perfect development of each single human life upon this earth; a world redeemed from sin, and selfishness, and strife; here is a purpose worth living for."

It is when we look back to the Fall from such certain results as these which are already shaping themselves into being under our very eyes, that we understand more of the nature of that spiritual

dissolution and death originally effected by the Fall. Just as sin in which each individual soul of that exalted life shared, wrought out the undoing of each member, and destroyed the entire corporate life in its communion with God, so the Holy Spirit and the saving grace of Christ, by gradually restoring the spiritual powers of single souls, are also raising the whole Body of the Church to a new joint-life with Christ, to be perfected hereafter.

CHAPTER VI

THE EVIDENCE OF BIOLOGY

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CHAPTER VI

THE EVIDENCE OF BIOLOGY

The first evolutionary picture which was flashed upon the mental screen more than half a century ago showed the whole drama of organic existence as the outcome of an apparently aimless system of physical causes. This picture has long since been destroyed. New facts and conclusions necessitated its being painted over again in order to remove its errors. Thus the more recent account of organic evolution, corrected to embrace all known facts, shows that vital developments upon this planet are the product of psychical factors acting in conjunction with those which are physical. But according to the Bible narrative the primary factors in the Fall were also of a psychical nature. In other words, both the Fall and organic evolution are results of psychical causes.

Now, if the pre-organic interpretation of the Fall is correct, we may expect to find in evolutional phenomena traces not only of a psychical energy, but of such an energy in a distinctly vitiated or impotent condition. Moreover, we may expect this energy to reveal signs of this typical characteristic in every stage, in increasing distinctness with each succeeding

advance towards its more final results. And so by following up the facts of biology we may hope to gain clear and definite knowledge of the meaning of the Fall-story and to be enabled to test the reliability of the foregoing views.

From the very outset there is a remarkable agreement between the main facts as told by Scripture and science, although the same events are recorded in very different language. The burdens described in the ancient history of the Fall as the penal effects of sin, entailing the constant pain and ceaseless effort said to be the inevitable accompaniment of the future fallen existence, are strangely re-echoed by what undoubtedly took place in primeval times amid the orderly calm of the inorganic world. Suddenly a new energy made its appearance. The uniform motions of inorganic matter and its comparative stability began to break up around certain nucleated centres and to pass into the strange organised disorder of vital metabolism. These new movements indicated nothing less than the first passing of portions of matter into a living condition. In other words, it was the first appearance of life. The dreadfulness of the burden delineated by Scriptural imagery is not equal to the actual facts. For from that hour the vital energy started upon an age-long travail which still continues. From that hour it began a ceaseless conflict with katabolic forces which has never rested for a single moment for countless millions of years and is in full action at the present minute. At this moment we hold within our bodies

certain cells or their counterparts which have been kept in repair and at an even temperature for unknown millions of years by nothing else than the vital activities of this energy, whose task has demanded throughout unspeakable ages that its labours shall know neither respite nor ending. As to why this profound change took place in what was mere lifeless matter science remains silent, and we turn to revealed knowledge for the clue.

The doctrines of the Fall and the Incarnation lead us to believe that beneath the process of organic evolution is involved a vital power which not only has fallen from a higher state of being, but which is possessed of great spiritual potentialities ; moreover, that although the potential spiritual life is capable of restoration, owing to its vitiated and deadened condition, this regeneration and transformation to a renewed glory could never be achieved by any natural process nor by any self-contained spontaneous efforts, but only by the supernatural grace and power of Jesus Christ.

We are now, however, only concerned with the first of these doctrines, not with the redemption but the Fall. Since the signal failure of the old mechanical ideas to account for the facts of organic life, an increasing number of biologists have turned to the deeper and more comprehensive views of the Neo-Vitalist Schools. These groups attach full value to the selective processes, but also embrace all other facts and factors within their purview ; thus arriving

nearer to the truth, on account of their more thorough and exhaustive marshalling of evidence and facts from all quarters. As an exponent of the most recent views upon the subject M. Bergson holds a prominent position.

He has rendered great service to the cause of truth by dispelling a great deal of confusion of thought, bringing the real nature of evolution more fully into broad daylight. From the start of origins he recognises the presence of a psychical factor and purpose in the vital impulse. He remarks :

[1] "The impetus of life of which we are speaking consists in a need of creation. It cannot create absolutely, because it is confronted with matter, that is to say with the movement that is the inverse of its own. But it seizes upon this matter which is necessity itself, and strives to introduce into it the largest possible amount of indetermination and liberty. . . . Life must be compared to an impetus, because no image borrowed from the physical world can give more nearly the idea of it. But it is only an image. In reality, life is of the psychological order, and it is of the essence of the psychical to enfold a confused plurality of interpenetrating terms."

If we accept the leading ideas given by the Fall we shall hold that this vital factor was in a vitiated condition at the time of its passing into association with matter. The evidence of biology completely coincides with this view. For scientific research

[1] *Creative Evolution*, Bergson, p. 265.

has shown that the primary movements of growth were not only without appreciable control of matter, but without any manifestations of conscious movement. The movements in question were so vague and blindly impotent that they were only enabled to produce progressive structures by putting forth an endless series of tentative erratic movements which were duly guided by selective environments. The original growths have generally been of such an aimless and indeterminate character that they were formerly considered by most investigators to be merely chance variations, due entirely to purposeless causes. Although the variation theory of the primary movements of growth is not correct, it throws the impotence of the living organising energy into strong relief.

M. Bergson starts, as above, by attributing this impotence to the fact that the psychical factor finds in matter a "movement that is the inverse of its own." But this does not explain the lack of control, and M. Bergson returns to the problem as follows, but without solving it. He adds: [1] "But concerning the vital impulse itself a few explanations are necessary. It must not be forgotten that the force which is evolving throughout the organized world is a limited force, which is always seeking to transcend itself and always remains inadequate to the work it fain would produce. The errors and puerilities of radical finalism are due to the misapprehension of this point. It has represented the whole of the

[1] *Creative Evolution*, M. Bergson, p. 133.

living world as a construction, and a construction analogous to a human work. All the pieces have been arranged with a view to the best possible functioning of the machine. Each species has its reason for existence, its part to play, its allotted place ; and all join together, as it were, in a musical concert, wherein the seeming discords are really meant to bring out a fundamental harmony. . . . Nothing of the kind in the evolution of life. There, the disproportion is striking between the work and the result. From the top to the bottom of the organized world we do indeed find one great effort ; but most often this effort turns short, sometimes paralysed by contrary forces, sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by the form it is engaged in taking, hypnotized as by a mirror. Even in its most perfect works, though it seems to have triumphed over external resistances and also over its own, it is at the mercy of the materiality which it has had to assume. It is what each of us may experience in himself. Our freedom, in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort : it is dogged by automatism. The most living thought becomes frigid in the formula that expresses it. The word turns against the idea. The letter kills the spirit."

Such, then, are some of the struggles of the fallen spiritual energy in its association with matter as they are seen by the student of vital phenomena. It may perhaps be objected that there are no definite reasons

for attributing the vagaries of living movements to a vitiated or impotent condition of the vital element associated with matter, rather than to the properties of the matter itself. This objection has been briefly met before. It entails nothing less than recourse to the materialistic explanation of the entire process of evolution with all its exploded fallacies. The impossibility to which it leads becomes apparent from a little consideration. For although the impotence and erratic movements of living matter are necessarily obscure in the rudimentary stages, in the conscious actions of man, which are merely more advanced phenomena of the same system, the obscurity has vanished. In human life we find exactly the same non-progressive, retrogressive and erratic tendencies in their most injurious forms. Here they can be practically always traced to the faulty condition of man's mental, psychical and spiritual powers either past or present.

Since we are dealing with one unbroken series of phenomena, we are forced to conclude that the erratic non-progressive and retrograde output of living matter is due to the same defective psychical element which is responsible for similar evolutional results in the higher levels of conscious action. The truth is that every living being in every stage of development exhibits a similar conspicuous inability to move spontaneously along the course that leads to order, to progress and beneficence. Except in the case of Jesus Christ, in the whole vast procession of life,

there is neither species nor individual of whom one could say that it displayed an unfailing tendency towards progress with an unfettered capacity for its attainment. Nowhere has man been able to act continuously in such a manner as to enable him to go straight forward to progress. In spite of a strong lead from gifted individuals here and there, in the mass he has always become the victim of various kinds of vagary and error. His record has been one continually missing the mark of his highest welfare instead of hitting it. The seat of his weakness has always been the same. The fault has not been in his brain so much as in his will, not physical but psychical. Throughout history his spiritual powers have proved defective. Saints as well as sinners have confessed that often when they have known the right, a fallen will has failed to obey it. Whatever divergence of opinion may exist in Christendom upon other points of this subject, there is a prevailing consent that the will in its most vital, spiritual, affectional depths is the seat of the ruin wrought by the Fall. Beyond this consensus of opinion, the fact that Christianity has worked such miracles of deliverance and progress by bringing life and power through Christ to the spiritual element in man, proves yet more finally where the seat of human trouble and impotence has been, all through the upward journey of the race and throughout the earthly existence of each individual.

Thus our brief survey of evolutionary facts has revealed undeniable proofs of the impotent and

vitiated nature of the psychical or spiritual energy which is at work behind the whole mysterious system of organic life. Therefore, according to the issues followed up, the pre-organic theory of the Fall is substantiated with all imaginable thoroughness by the facts of evolution.

At this point a further question suggests itself. If the vital energy is in nature thus fallen and vitiated, how have the forthcoming evolutionary results reached such wonderful levels of advance as the production, on the one hand, of the human body, and on the other, of the complex Christian civilisations ?

Let us take the subject of bodily development first. It is quite certain, and biologists will fully endorse the statement, that such blind erratic efforts as those of the vital output could never have led to the development of progressive structures and the human body, if they had not been sifted, pruned and guided on all sides by the laws by which the possibilities of material existence are conditioned and rendered possible. It would be impossible to attain any true conception of organic evolution without clearly recognising the all-important part performed by that most complex set of laws, or physical, mental, moral and spiritual necessities by which the possibilities of bodily existence are limited and determined. The effect of these factors upon bodily development has been quite paramount. Nor shall we be able to form any adequate idea of the feebleness of the efforts

of the vital energy until we have fully recognised that the shape, form, size, and all other details of the design of the human body, as well as the chemical constituents of its materials, have been determined and forced into being by the minutely accurate and unswerving action and direction of God's conditioning laws.

True, the vital energy has supplied a continuous stream of living matter containing structures which under the influences of heredity gradually became more and more specialised. In these structures more numerous physical and other principles became embodied in greater variety and in more widely differing association. But the work of guiding, moulding, rejecting, cherishing, has been affected by the complex ruling laws which have ceaselessly exerted their formative pressure upon the inconstant vacillating outgrowths of living matter. This formative pressure of the conditioning laws has been applied both by lifeless and living agents ; either *directly*,—by arresting or encouraging certain growths through inorganic media such as climatic conditions ; or, far more frequently, *indirectly*, through the action of other living creatures which have embodied more fully than their less fortunate neighbours some important association of the principles by means of which they have proved superior in competition.

When the selective operations were first discovered, great perplexity reigned as to their true nature and meaning. It is well known now that the struggle for

life merely represents a very complex interaction of living beings one with another in which certain laws embodied in the competitors come into effective action, and through the living embodiments assert their peculiar vital value and formative effect ultimately upon each and all of the competitors. The most potent of the conditioning laws thus coming into formative action are not always those of physical strength. Some favoured competitors win by means of some principles, others through having embodied a different combination of principles. Every known principle almost appears in animal embodiments. But in the interaction of open competition only certain types are favoured by the tribunal of the conditioning laws. The net physical result of all interaction, in other words the most final formative effect of all the laws of physical and other necessities which condition life on earth, is the human body. Thus far the machinery of evolution is easy to understand. It seems as though the conditioning laws would rapidly prove omnipotent in their progressive action. But the fact that all beings avoid battle with superiors, and the tendency to hide or in some way to secure isolation from competition, has held up the action of many of the formative laws, and led to the multiplication of innumerable low types of creatures which in any kind of free interaction would soon have become extinct.

If we examine a diagram showing the tree of organic development sketched from nature, showing man as the consummation of the main stem, this

stem will be seen to bristle from root to crown with excurrent branches, representing the numerous kinds of living creatures produced by the erratic efforts of the vital energy, and incidentally finding some devious means of avoiding open interaction. Such creatures are the wanderers from the narrow way which has led to man, the highest type of being, and the aim of *bodily* evolution. The existence of these wanderers from the main highway of the vital movement has proved a stumbling-block to many who have expected to find indications of aim and beneficence in every effort of organic nature. The vitiated nature of the vital energy forbids this, and at once explains the erratic production of every kind of injurious parasite or low and useless organism; whilst their escaping the action of the conditioning laws explains their survival. Some have formed their opinion of the whole of evolution from these stagnant backwaters of inevitable phenomena. It would be equally incorrect to imagine that the aim and operation of the conditioning laws have been defeated by the devices and subterfuges by which their eliminative actions have been avoided. These laws have ultimately carried out their work in spite of every incidental opposition. All the species avoiding their action remain for ever side-tracked at a greater or lesser distance from the main progressive current of life.

The object of referring to these facts somewhat at length is to show that the wonderful upward trend of bodily development is not due to any marked

power in the vital energy of initiating progressive structures. On the contrary, when such higher organisations have been produced by selective processes, the vital forces have not only consistently proved unable to maintain the output at the advanced level, but have lapsed into retrogressive productions or sudden reversions to type. It would be impossible to consider the above contrast between the non-progressive, impotent tendency of the living outgrowths and the irresistibly progressive effect of the conditioning laws, without recognising that in its unprogressive impotence the vital energy appears from the very first far more like a vitiated element than a form of energy selected by divine choice and empowered by divine might, and set to work out the programme of a merciful, rapid, and as far as possible painless evolution. On the other hand, the more the collaboration of what we have called the conditioning laws is considered, the more distinctly they tell of the power and beneficence of a divine love assisting in the preparation of a far distant redemption.

Therefore, if it be asked, how, considering the fallen nature of the vital energy and the unstable character of the vital output, the wonderful upward development of evolution has been achieved? The reply must be that the gift of a human body is due to the action of the conditioning laws of God which have determined and enabled the action of the selective processes. If the question be asked how has fallen man gained his moral development and spiritual regeneration? The answer must be,

through the power of the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit. To the same Divine assistance we owe also our Christian civilisation.

We can now make a great advance towards a general and fundamental understanding of organic evolution. Formerly there was great difficulty in recognising aim and purpose in its complex phenomena. Anything in the nature of aim and formative purpose seemed forbidden by the flourishing existence of all kinds of low forms of life, parasites and degenerates. Moreover, a further aspect of aimlessness was imparted by the apparently wanton system of slaughter, only equalled in its persistence and apparent cruelty by nature's prodigal output of things to be killed. On appealing to theology for a solution of the mystery the difficulty became accentuated. For under the evolutionary theory of the Fall the only answer could be, that the abhorrent features were God's chosen methods of dealing with beings alleged to be sinless, for the purpose of the original creation of the human soul. Instead of such darkness the pre-organic theory offers an all-sufficient light. By insisting upon the vitiated nature of the vital energy, and by giving sound reasons for this belief, it explains the impotent and aimless character of the vital output. Moreover, by denying that evolution is a system of creation, and by showing that it is a system of re-creation having the ulterior spiritual aim of the restoration of fallen souls, the entire aspect of evolution is changed.

That is to say, instead of being a creative or purely *constructive* process, it is shown to be also from the very start a strongly *destructive* process. Now, the effect of this light is to reduce the former aimless confusion of the struggle for life, and indeed of evolution as a whole, to an ordered process of re-creation. It becomes clear that the nature of evolution is not to be judged only by its prominent *constructive* operations which so evidently foster the progressive and good, but also from its equally persistent *destructive* operations which ceaselessly work towards the elimination of the retrogressive and evil. Thus the due recognition of the inherent vitiation supplies a clue to the actual nature of the organic process.

In the above contrast we have an unintelligible evolution, side by side with an organic process fully explained in character, and corresponding with all sides of human experience. And we have also a false and helpless theory of the Fall side by side with one which seems to bear the very light of truth. On comparing the above alternatives there can be little doubt in which direction the truth lies. Under the pre-organic theory the most repulsive and apparently cruel features of animal interaction, or, as it is called, the struggle for life, find their full explanation. They are explained by the fact that in the selective processes there is going on from the very earliest stages a most necessary destruction of vital evil, as well as preliminary steps towards the reconstruction of that which can become eternally

good. The manner in which the destruction of evil physical growths has been persistently carried out perhaps demands further notice. We have already observed how the great majority of unneeded forms of life have been swept away, mainly by the conditioning laws becoming effective through competitive interaction. By these means some measure of uniformity in organic types has been reached. By the apparently aimless struggles for existence, where competition has been unrestricted, chiefly evil types —that is to say, the non-progressive and anti-human species, have been destroyed. In effecting these results the remarkable feature of the conditioning laws is that their action has not been vaguely destructive of the evil, but highly discriminative to the minutest details, as is proved by the premium put upon the highest type of human organisation. Moreover, by their eliminative discrimination these laws have exerted a definitely unifying effect upon the vital output.

Thus the whole of the destructive unifying action of God's laws form a significant prelude to the subsequent evil-destroying and unifying results produced by Christianity amid the erratic deviations, the sins and discordant disagreements of human lives. In this eliminative work of Christianity we at once recognise the destruction of the evil results of the Fall. From the nature of these evil results, as clearly seen in human sin, the nature of the vitiation of the Fall may be correctly understood. If we reject the fact of a pre-organic Fall, both the existence

of primary evil in the erratic output of retrograde growths, and the destructive and discriminative work of their elimination remain unexplained mysteries, and the whole of evolution falls back into a meaningless tangle bearing human life with it.

But if, on the other hand, recognising the pre-organic theory and the joint destructive and constructive work of the conditioning laws, we pass on to consider Christianity, the whole story of evolution and human history unfolds as a wonderful unity. We find that as soon as the first re-constructive stage had achieved its destined results of the human body and an advanced social life, the great operations of the second stage began to open up. Little by little the transcendent might of the Incarnation began to come into effective action. Gradually, but on retrospect quite visibly, humanity began to pass under the guiding influence of a spiritual power of an altogether higher and more potent order than any which had manifested its presence in any of the preceding periods.

As far as the bare facts of history go, they fully prove that the Christian term "Redemption" describes the immediate effects of Christ's work better than any other. The wonderful release from the age-long bondage of sin-ridden paganism into the spiritual life and freedom of a Christian civilisation, with its inestimable spiritual joys and riches, was a veritable redemption from the slavery of animalism. Leaving out of consideration those redemptive

benefits which none can know until they have passed the veil ; better than any one else, the student of biology who has his eyes open to the meaning of the Fall can recognise that the uplift from the animal to the spiritual, from sin to holiness, given through the Incarnation by the grace of Christ, constituted a real "*buying back*" from pre-existing conditions of permanent animality ; conditions by nature hopeless, which have proved throughout history void of spiritually regenerative power, and consequently incapable of permanently raising the corporate life of man to higher levels.

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND A PRE-ORGANIC FALL

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CHAPTER VII

CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE AND A PRE-ORGANIC FALL

ALTHOUGH it would be impossible to fix upon any approximate date when a belief in a pre-bodily Fall first took definite shape in the human mind, the doctrine is doubtless pre-Platonic and of great antiquity. It had been apparently known to the Jews long before the birth of Christ. As expanded by Philo half a century later it was not a novelty. For these reasons, if for no others, it is certain that the doctrine would have been familiar to Christ. Moreover, from the writings of St. Paul and some of the Early Fathers we can only conclude that it had met with our Lord's acceptance as actual truth, or at least was not considered in any respects contrary to the special teaching He imparted to the inner group of His disciples.

It is evident from certain passages in the Gospels that Christ gave to those of His disciples best fitted to receive it, teaching which was not then to be promiscuously made public. Considering the many centuries adequately served by the childlike literal views of the Fall, and the complicated biological facts which have only just rendered the truth of a

pre-organic Fall clearly intelligible, the words of Jesus Christ at least seem applicable to it, [1] "For there is nothing hid, save that it should be manifested; neither was anything made secret, but that it should come to light. If any man hath ears to hear, let him hear."

On the other hand, we must remember that in asking what views of the Fall were general in Apostolic times, we are enquiring about the ideas of men who were not primarily concerned with the intellectual side of the Fall at all. It was for them a sure and certain truth which had neither been shaken by scientific facts nor obscured by untenable theories. Moreover, the spiritual side of the Fall, with its resulting sin and deadly influences, was the battlefield which for the moment was absorbing all their attention and energies in persistent warfare. The Epistles show clearly enough the practical and urgent nature of the questions which beset them, and the constant calls for spiritual help which arose from converts surrounded by the powers of evil. The work was unlimited, their day short and liable to be shortened at any time by the call to martyrdom. It is obvious that such conditions as these would direct the thoughts to practical duties. Thus we learn from the Gospels that the Apostles were encouraged by their Lord and Master to focus all their faculties upon the spiritual opportunities of their environment, and to devote all their energies to the evangelisation of the world as a work entrusted

[1] Mark iv. 22-24.

to them—a work very close to the heart of God and of vital importance to the whole human race. They were neither to stop to think of the number of those who should be saved nor to consider questions of times and seasons. They were to hasten forward through life and death towards their goal, leaving the development of the future with all its problems in the hands of the Father.

In view of all the facts it seems probable that to some or many of the disciples the question as to when the Fall occurred never presented itself for determination. But in the sacred group as elsewhere there would be thinkers as well as those of unenquiring faith. For some, an implicit faith in Christ and in the story of the Fall would have been sufficient to preclude all further enquiry. For others, ripe for more advanced views, their Master's enlightenment would have been available. In any case it is certain, that although the outlook and calls of the Apostolic period may have stimulated the spiritual faculties rather than the intellectual, yet the Apostles held the main facts of the Christian Faith with an understanding both clear and definite.

For instance, it is certain that Christ taught His disciples the redemptive and re-creative nature of His work for mankind. In the background of their minds stood the Fall and its resultant sin. In the foreground the equally distinct facts of the atoning Life and Death, and the Resurrection. They fully recognised that in the origin and progress of the

Church the operations of the Holy Ghost were regenerative in their nature and aim. They knew that seasons of restoration, times of spiritual re-making were upon them, and the work to which they were ordained was not the creation of souls but a re-creation. Their Gospel was not one of mere future advance and future attainment, but it was primarily a Gospel of the unmaking of the past. A Gospel of forgiveness of the past following upon a change of the will of the past, and remission or cancelling of past causes. These were specifically the first needs of fallen man without which the further gifts of grace would be of no avail. And these gifts offered in full in Jesus Christ were by nature redemptive and re-creative.

With such clear knowledge of the restorative character of their Master's work they must have possessed a firm belief in the fact of the Fall. Although there is no reason for supposing that the minds of all viewed the Fall-story in the same light, all would glean from it the same cardinal truths regarding the past and present conditions of the human spirit. We can hardly imagine, for instance, the insight of St. John failing to penetrate the utmost depths of the Fall-story.

But if we desire to reach anything like a true idea of the general outlook which was open to the ordinary active mind of those times, we must take account of the immense panorama of new facts which science has recently placed before our eyes. Whereas modern

research has opened up vast retrospective views to our sight, they had no such extensive backgrounds to their ideas of the earthly life of mankind. Whereas science has mapped off for us one great remote epoch during which only the lower forms of life existed, and another vast period during which man gradually made his steep ascent, they could only look back a very short distance to a time comparatively close at hand when Adam and all things were created. Thus the range of their retrospect back to the unfallen world was so short compared to ours, that in thought they naturally passed with the greatest ease from their own conditions of life to those of the unfallen Adam, without being conscious either of the vast gulf of time between them, or of the diametrical contrasts dividing the two states of existence.

For this reason we cannot be surprised at the popularity and complete sufficiency of the old literal explanation of the Fall in the case of the unenquiring. Nor in the case of the thinkers, shall we be surprised to find early Christian writers occasionally passing backwards and forwards from the literal views to more advanced ideas, sometimes regarding Adam as a historic personality, sometimes as a personification or mystical head of the race ; without being aware of the distance thus travelled, or of the inaccuracy of one or other of the divergent views. In other words, it is necessary to remember that the age we are dealing with was generally unaccustomed to exact distinctions of critical thought, so that a mind might embrace a partial belief in both the literal and

the ulterior meaning of the Fall, without being conscious of any vital distinction or contrast between the two. In the case of the highly educated, as for example with St. Paul, the clearest appreciation of the points at issue existed with a definite belief in a pre-organic Fall. At the same time, the necessity of using the old figures and language existed as well. For the office of an Apostle was also that of an instructor of babes.

Partly on account of the facts just mentioned we shall not expect to find in the Bible detailed teaching regarding the nature of the Fall. Moreover, as is well known, the Bible method is to give fundamental facts and principles and seeds of truth on all spiritual subjects of vital importance, but not to give fully detailed information or rigid definitions. In the nature of things room is left for the gradual unfolding of the truth. It would be a serious error to suppose that the comparative silence or brief instruction upon such a matter as the nature of the Fall means either the affirmation or denial of any particular views which may have commended themselves to the mind of any particular period.

In order to make this subject clear let us note briefly what the aim of Biblical information is, and the sphere to which it is limited. The Bible aims solely at giving information about spiritual subjects. It touches upon others at certain points only because it is unavoidably necessary to do so. The two-fold material-spiritual existence of man makes it essential

for him to deal with and understand both sides of his complex environment, both the material and the spiritual. Both his spiritual experiences and bodily experiences must be correctly understood, and, be it noted, many of the complex relationships of the two sides to each other. Now, although the Bible is the world's greatest and unique guide to spiritual knowledge, its true sphere is limited to the spiritual. Knowledge of material things is left to the gradual unfolding of the truth by means of bodily experiences and physical research. Therefore it is evident that the relation of bodily evolution and our present life to the Fall is a matter to be finally made clear rather by physical research than by the spiritual messages of the Bible.

But it may be asked how can it be claimed that the Bible imparts all necessary spiritual information when the present age is so seriously in the dark about the nature and meaning of the Fall ?

The reply to this question has already been given. It is that the fault rests with man and not with the Bible. The obscuration of the Fall has proceeded in defiance of the Bible's teaching. For whilst the spiritual meaning of the Fall is clearly taught by the imagery of the Fall-story, its deadly nature, its pre-organic occurrence and far-reaching consequences, together with the divine remedy are clearly outlined in the Pauline epistles. Nowhere does the Bible by any injunction teach that the Fall-story is to be literally understood. On the contrary, our Lord's frequent use of picture-language should have loosened

the bands of all such literalism. It is solely due to human perversity that the meaning of the Fall-story has been so obscured by literalism, that as a consequence the corrective and progressive teachings of St. Paul have been passed by as unintelligible, or mere rhetorical flights of mystical imagination. It is true that the Bible gives no systematic teachings on the Fall-story fully opening up its pre-organic allusions. Such a course would not be consistent with its principles just noted. But here as elsewhere its teaching is a matter of fundamental outlines. Upon the subject of the Fall it provides that direct mental touch, that revelation of the teacher's personal knowledge, which is all-sufficient both to indicate the direction where the truth lies, and to shed a co-ordinating explanatory light upon all new facts.

The above facts show that in the nature of things we cannot expect detailed and complete information about the Fall from Biblical writings. The Epistles of St. Paul carry our minds not only beyond the most advanced ideas of the age in which they were penned, but beyond all that we know distinctly at the present day. For they carry us to the very Consummation itself. Time and the growth of knowledge in collateral subjects, as has been the case in evolutionary science, are the conditions necessary to open up and make clear the Apostle's full meaning. Therefore he gives no rigid details about the Fall, only the hazy outlines of an inspired knowledge. As is the case with a bodily embryo, the foundation work is there

before it is required, ready for subsequent advance. The details and features of the mature structure are not apparent and cannot become so until the future causes and conditions necessary for their development have come into action. This is true of the facts of the Fall and of all Christian doctrines. The deeper meanings and truths are unfolded by degrees, through the stimulus and effect of very complex causes, chiefly spiritual. All periods are by no means periods of growth in doctrinal knowledge.

Thus we find that the time of the Apostolic Fathers passed without any new development in current ideas of the Fall. Almost the same may be said of the subsequent years until the days of Irenaeus. Growing intellectual activity and the birth of erroneous theories led him to consider many questions regarding the nature of man and the Fall. If it were asked whether he believed in a historical Adam or a pre-organic Fall it would be difficult to give a decided answer. He quotes and accepts St. Paul's opinion regarding the solidarity of the race in Adam. But his ideas regarding Adam are indistinct. If we attribute to him a definite belief in a historical Adam his statements become contradictory and their discrepancies quite irreconcilable.

Dr. Tennant remarks, [1] "It has embarrassed many students of this Father to find on different pages of his writings, statements so diverse as, for instance, the following: that Man was made at the first after both image and likeness of God: that both image

[1] *The Fall and Original Sin*, p. 285.

and likeness were lost through Adam's fall ; that the image and likeness were both absent from man when he was first created, and were to be afterwards attained ; that Man was created after the divine image, the likeness being separately received through the Spirit, and alone lost by Man." If we suppose that Irenaeus had in mind a pre-organic Fall and that his references allude partly to the extra-temporal existence and partly to the fallen life, the passages no longer appear discordant. On the other hand, many of his expressions seem to show a definite belief in the historical truth of the Fall-story. The above passages are useful in showing how confused and indistinct the thoughts of the most talented Christian writers of those times were when dealing with this obscured subject. In the same way most of the pre-Augustinian Fathers use language embodying such a variety of ideas regarding the Fall, and often so confused in details, that as a net result they give us no certain information as to what road human thought was travelling upon in its endeavour to reach the truth.

Therefore no account of the Christian doctrine of the Fall can be true which does not recognise the inner consciousness of a deeper meaning often coming within the mental vision of Christian teachers. In other words, the immature conditions of thought and knowledge in bygone times created the habit of rigidly adhering to the language and figures of Genesis whilst often holding diverse, vague and undecided views about the Fall. Such a mental

habit permitted great elasticity of thought. Thus a speaker might indulge in a rapid passage from a literal view of the Fall to a mystical one without his audience being confused or failing to understand his spiritual meaning. Thus also the difficulty of reconciling the Adamic belief of Irenaeus with his other statements recurs in the writings of modern theologians of the first rank. It seems that the actual truth about the nature of the Fall cannot be concealed except by complete silence upon certain topics. It is too vast a truth to be kept out of sight except by intention and extreme care.

The following examples—casually chosen from Dr. Westcott's writings—will make the point clear.

For example, when speaking of God's original purpose of unifying His Creation in Christ through the Incarnation Dr. Westcott remarks : [1] "We have seen that the conceivableness of the Incarnation lies in the thought of what man was originally made, and not what he became through his self-assertion." But if we exclude the idea of a pre-organic Fall from the writer's mind, what as a matter of fact is the highest and noblest picture which modern knowledge can give of man as he was "originally made"? An anthropoid ape, or an individual of primeval type, with little or no moral sense, but heavily burdened with brutishness. If he was a being upheld by the gift of super-added grace, then his nature as he was "originally made" appears at a

[1] *Christus Consummator*, p. 116.

still greater disadvantage, since supernatural aid was powerless to avert his Fall.

Only one explanation of this passage is possible, for this author never wrote without a meaning. Obviously his profound thoughts were penetrating back far behind evolutionary man to the sinless condition in which God originally made him. Surely the unity of that divine, harmonious and unfallen existence is the fact which the writer asks us to recall, in order that we may reach forward to the idea of the restored unity which he points out as being the purpose of God in Christ.

Or to take another example from the same page. Dr. Westcott writes, speaking of each individual's personal responsibility in the Fall: [1] "There is we feel a 'baseness in our blood,' and we feel also that we have embodied the corruption 'by our fault, by our own fault, by our own great fault.' . . . We look around us, and we see the double sentence of our own consciences written on a large scale in the crimes and judgements of classes and nations, in the deeds of selfish violence which betray a common taint." What in reality is the cause and actual background of this tremendous sense of sin so truly pointed out? [2] Is it merely the moral failures of one or a few prehistoric ancestors whose instinct-ridden deeds could scarcely be called their own, and with less accuracy our own? Surely such a reference can only be to the wilful godlessness and fully conscious transgressions of a bygone existence

[1] *Christus Consummator*, p. 116. [2] *Vide* p. 81.

in which each soul had a participation only too truly.

Further on, the words of the same writer present the same issue even more clearly. Dr. Westcott is speaking of the pain, the imperfection and suffering of the creation. He says: [1] "We communicate to our environment the semblance of our deadness, as we have communicated to it once for all the issue of our fall." Since it would be impossible that a mundane Fall should have had a physically retrospective effect upon the whole of the organic world, blighting an innocent creation, the conclusion is that the writer had in mind the truth of a common origin of all physical life vitiated at its source by previous sin.

But to return to the writings of the Early Fathers. Doubtless even the thinkers among them would have been content to have awaited the future, satisfied with the Pauline guidance towards a pre-bodily Fall. But the stimulus of outside mental activity and the spread of plausible pagan ideas in Greece, Alexandria and on all sides, seemed to call for more advanced views. Thus some Christian teachers were induced to go beyond St. Paul's teaching, filling in their extended outlines with details which were often pure speculation. The most notable of these and the only one who claims our attention here is Origen.

Since the fact must be noted about this most zealous and saintly Father, may it be mentioned

[1] *Christus Consummator*, p. 137.

with all reverence. His speculative theories and erroneous ideas of scriptural interpretation resulted in serious injury to the cause of truth. The doctrine which especially concerns us here was his theory of a pre-mundane Fall. But his ideas and expressions of the underlying truth of an extra-temporal Fall were so mixed with error in themselves, and later on became so closely associated with the groundless and dangerous theories he put forward on other subjects, that his notions not only aroused a healthy opposition in sounder minds, but in spite of a considerable following in some quarters, caused in the end a powerful and almost universal reaction against all his views. Thus the truth of an extra-temporal Fall as wrongly expounded by Origen met indirectly with a discredit which branded it for centuries with ill-fame, if not with falseness.

Since the history of this subject is the history of the first great obscuration of the Fall it will be worth while to deal with it somewhat at length in order to note exactly what the truth is. Origen's fundamental error regarding the Fall arose from his having forsaken the true lines laid down by St. Paul and having followed the lead of pagan speculation. For example, instead of the Biblical doctrine of the universality of sin existing throughout the human race as throughout a solid unity, he substituted the Platonic idea of a pre-mundane fall of single souls who carry into a penal corporeal life the effect of their individual pre-natal sin. From this false start and

initial contrast, his views necessarily diverged in vital points more and more widely than those of the Christian teachers before him. It was, however, centuries after his death that the clouds of condemnation fell upon his name, passing indiscriminately over all his teachings. The historian Robertson [1] tells us that it was not his views upon the Fall, nor his vagaries in other matters of doctrine which brought about this result, but his perverse method of interpreting the Scriptures allegorically. This formed a precedent for a practice which continued to spread long after Origen died, supplying a false scriptural basis for all kinds of speculative and heretical theories. Taking shelter under a name once famous, a sect of heretics calling themselves "Origenists" were condemned at Alexandria over a century after Origen's death. Dr. Hook [2] gives the list of the nine grotesque false doctrines they put forward, none of which had any basis in his teachings. In another city as far distant as Constantinople, and as late as the year 543, a similar condemnation of heresies attributed to the posthumous influence of Origen took place in a local Synod.

Now, although these proceedings have no direct bearing of any kind upon true and Christian views of a pre-organic Fall, yet they show us with historical certainty the way in which the light of an extra-temporal Fall was obscured in the past. It was not only mixed up with pagan inaccuracies and

[1] *Church History*, Robertson, vol. i. p. 157.

[2] Dean Hook's *Church Dictionary*, p. 556.

expounded by a teacher who forsook the plain lines of scriptural guidance, but Origen seems to have given himself up to unsubstantiated speculation, dragging with him into the mire of error and discredit those invaluable facts which under other circumstances might have received their true expansion and setting. In this case they might have shed forth an increasing light down the centuries, illuminating also our own times, now still groping in darkness.

But in justice to the memory of so noble a character as Origen, whom Jerome calls "the greatest master of the Church after the Apostles," it is necessary to record the belief of those best qualified to judge, that numerous false doctrines were maliciously attributed to him long after his death. Fatal as such causes were to the acceptation of Origen's already distorted message of an extra-temporal Fall, yet another cause arose which tended to extinguish the last spark of its smothered light; namely, the fact that its particular beliefs lent themselves very readily to false theories of spirit and matter. This danger fully explains the reasonable attitude of the Early Church and why existing conditions were so favourable to the literal interpretation of the Fall-story.

The history of this subject shows in a most striking manner how dangerous even such information as the true meaning of the Fall may become to those who try to walk the deep seas of knowledge without the aid of Christ. What happened in this case is typical

of the inability of fallen man to resist misunderstanding truths however simply stated and however important. Instead of being able to deal truly with the facts of an extra-temporal Fall, making a right use of them as a starting-point for solid advance in moral and spiritual understanding, by a fatal process of false logic the error arose that since the unfallen life was spiritual and was so exalted and good, and since the fallen life was material and was so degraded and evil, therefore the source of all evil must reside in matter. Thus without an atom of real evidence upon this most vital point, they concluded off-hand that all matter must be essentially evil, and all spirit essentially good.

It would be impossible to imagine a false conclusion more hostile to the cause of goodness, or more fatal in effecting the downfall of man's highest powers. By side-tracking their victims off the lines of truth and leading them on to a series of further false conclusions, these errors have robbed and still rob countless thousands of the light of life. They still conceal the inherent impotence and inability of the natural man to attain to holiness by his own powers. By supplying self-centred motives, this supreme fallacy is still cutting off innumerable souls from the vitalising love and saving grace of Jesus Christ. To such erroneous opinions regarding spirit and matter and their effects, the profound doctrines of Christianity afford a God-given antidote. The Incarnation itself and the teachings

of Christ show that matter is neither good nor evil, but capable of being pressed into the service of either. We learn that the only source of good or evil is to be found in a free-will personality.

With the above dangers in view we can easily understand the attitude of the Early Church with regard to the meaning of the Fall. When we remember that Gnosticism carried the deadly errors concerning the evil nature of matter into the very fold of the Church in the critical period of her infancy; and when we recall the needless, unscriptural features which Origen embodied in his theories, we cannot be surprised that however advanced their own views might be, the Christian leaders of that period considered that Origen's doctrines which were all associated in authorship with a dangerous heresy, could not be taught without the risk of incidentally promoting the above deadly errors. Moreover, in those days the literal interpretation had not been disproved, and whilst affording a passable explanation, was entirely free from current dangers. In addition to these reasons, as we have just noticed, the heretical accretions which had become so interwoven with Origen's ideas seemed to make it necessary to repudiate this great teacher's views root, stock, and branch. In the above events we have before us some important issues which caused the early guardians of Christian truth to take steps which have led to the difficulties of the present day. The first step was adherence to literal views whose failure has deprived us of our old beliefs. The second was the

unqualified and vigorous repudiation of an extra-temporal theory which in spite of errors contained an invaluable germ of truth. These steps arrested all progress towards a correct habit of thought in succeeding centuries creating both our present disinclination to seek the truth in the right direction and our unwillingness to recognise its presence in the Pauline doctrine.

This chapter has hitherto been taken up with tracing out the mental attitude of Christians in bygone centuries to the meaning and doctrine of the Fall. If a pre-organic Fall be a fact at all, we shall expect to find not only that its obscuration has been a hindrance to a clear understanding of various Christian doctrines in the past, but that when its light is unveiled and released it will shine through upon some of the darker passages of life and upon some of the more discouraging problems of our Faith.

There is no fact which affords such a final explanation and solid corroboration of Christian beliefs regarding pain[1] as that of a pre-organic Fall. If we reject this truth, and start with the belief that the vast system of non-human beings is untouched by the disease of sin, it will appear inexplicable how a Divine Love could have condemned them to an existence having at best a considerable share of pain. Mercifully great stretches of their existence are not conscious in anything approaching the human sense of the term. Yet in spite of every effort to place the

[1] *Vide* also p. 98.

lowest possible estimate upon their suffering there is an irreducible minimum of pain which only the truth can explain.

Dr. Russel Wallace wrote: [1] "On the whole, then, we conclude that the popular idea of the struggle for existence entailing misery and pain on the animal world is the very reverse of the truth. What it really brings about, is, the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life with the minimum of suffering and pain." He also quoted Darwin as saying: "When we reflect on this struggle, we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant, that no fear is felt, that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy, and the happy survive and multiply."

The opinions of two such close students of nature are worthy of all respect, but they are very optimistic. However, it is this irreducible "minimum of suffering" which, except as the result of sin, seems intolerably unworthy of the majesty and love and creative power and wisdom of God. This view may be incorrect, but neither the character of Christ, nor the facts of existence, nor the definite teaching of the Bible suggest that it is. If reason unaided by revealed knowledge were to ask, why *sinless* creatures should be thus submitted to pain, and placed under conditions which demand that they shall only live by killing and preying on each other, and finally shall disappear, or after aeons of corporeal pain, if ever, follow the ascent of man, and like him evolve often

[1] *Darwinism*, A. R. Wallace, p. 40.

into moral failures, the question would assuredly be unanswerable.[1]

But directly we know that the whole system is the result of sin, the difficulties vanish, giving place to a quickening though dim realisation of the terrible nature of sin. Herein the pains and the sorrows of the mortal life, including death, are all explained from their very root and origin. For God's own wish and design never was that a bodily existence such as this should be the result of His gift of freewilled personality. So sacred and exalted was this gift that probably even His omniscience could not foresee that it would be desecrated by sin. Thus the truth of a pre-organic Fall leads us to the full explanation of pain. The primary association of the vital energy and matter involved in bodily evolution was not due to God's unfettered will, but to the misuse of freewill on the part of souls blessed with a far different and more glorious existence. Obviously God has allowed and ordained our earthly existence, but only as a most merciful means of restoration, and also of salvation from the nethermost depths which lie beneath us. If we wish to judge of the nature and glory of the life that God originally gave us, we must study and understand the life He is still labouring to give us afresh.

It is necessary here to examine the logic and value of the opposite view, that pain and trial are part of God's chosen methods of an original creation.

[1] Compare the views of Mr. H. G. Wells in *The Undying Fire*, p. 95 *et seq.*, *et passim*.

Since we believe in an omnipotent God, we have no right to limit His powers of creation to methods which commend themselves to our finite intelligence. At the same time we are equally bound not to adopt views of His methods which are both contrary to the evidence of facts and which undoubtedly seem incompatible with what we know of His perfections of holiness and love. To adhere blindly to views of this kind in the face of contrary evidence would be to follow the lead of untruth and to raise fatal barriers against understanding Christian doctrine. Obviously the right use of the evil in the world as a means of calling out virtue is a fact to be credited with its full importance. As Canon Quarry remarked in his Donnellan Lecture: [1] "In proportion to the difficulty attending the performance of duty, or the strength of the temptation to do wrong, right doing rises in the measure of excellence and claims approbation. Whether it be from the nature of the circumstances, or the force of propensions or appetites, innocent in themselves but naturally excited by the objects to which they tend, apart from all considerations of duty, it would seem that for any high order of virtue and for strengthening habits of righteousness there must be a moral conflict, a contest with external difficulties, or a law in the members warring against the law of the mind."

Let it be clearly noted in the first place that this view definitely limits God's powers by assuming His inability to create anything so exalted as the

[1] *Religious Belief and its Difficulties*, Dr. Quarry, p. 19.

human virtue of a saintly character, without recourse to the experiences of animal existence. This assumption is not justifiable. There is also a further reason for rejecting such a line of reasoning. No doubt the tension between self and duty, as well as the effect of pain and effort may be of the greatest value in building up the weak powers and imperfect virtue of our present fallen nature. But the argument opposing us assumes that evolution was originally unfallen and a sinless process of creation. If this be true, and it was designed to go forward without sin to perfect results, the corrective aim and value of its initial painful competitive basis vanishes. On the other hand, if the pain-producing system was designed to meet the certainty of an evolutionary Fall destined to happen at a later time, it is impossible not to regard both the pain and the resulting sin as part of the direct plan and intention of God. Thus by lack of any reasonable alternative we are once again sent back to the fact of a pre-organic Fall. As a creative process, evolution is neither logical nor intelligible. As a system of re-creation it is both, and more for as such it is overshadowed throughout by a Divine Love and Forgiveness.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN ACCOUNTS OF THE SOUL-LIFE

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CHAPTER VIII

THE CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN ACCOUNTS OF THE SOUL-LIFE

There is no need to add to what has been incidentally mentioned already as to the light which a pre-organic Fall casts upon some of the most important and yet obscure features of the doctrine of sin. Without a definite and real belief in sin and human sinfulness there can be no true belief in the Redemption and Christian doctrine. It will make no ultimate difference to its saving power whether such belief is the simple faith of the unenquiring or the reasoned conclusions of the intellectual; provided it be allowed to bear its fruit in the life, and to find its consummation in the inward experiences of a spiritual revelation of the Redeemer. Therefore, perhaps more than any other item of subsidiary knowledge, the fact of the pre-organic Fall leads naturally to an intelligent understanding of the Redemption, and to a genuine recognition of its mercy, its love and unspeakable benefaction. In previous chapters we have noticed the remarkable blindness of our times to these facts, and also the obscuring causes which have prevented the actual facts of the Redemption

and its vital issues from being clearly recognised in their true connection with the main facts of human life and organic evolution.

In order to make the truth clear and to reduce the network of side issues to an orderly simplicity, it will be best to start from the beginning, and to show in contrast what are the only two accounts of the human soul-life worth considering. The true or Christian account will be placed in contrast to the untrue or pagan account. The former is the result of revelation and divine guidance. The latter is the outcome of man's natural intelligence. As the accounts unfold, the meaning, the logic, the power, the universality, the love and divine likelihood of the Redemption all become manifest. The story will be found to be all-embracing. There are no gaps nor contradictions. Although portions lead us to depths where we cannot follow, the continuity of its meaning and aim is never broken.

The subject starts with the undeniable fact that the human individual is an imperfect spiritual being living in a body of flesh and blood. As an eye-opening cure to the blind prejudice of materialism, and as a help towards realising the certainty of human existence outside the mortal body, a knowledge of modern spiritism even at second-hand often has considerable efficiency. The question at once arising from this knowledge is, why did the human spirit become incarnate in a material body at all, especially under such painful conditions as those of bodily life ? We at once enter upon the contrast.

The alternative views as to how this originated may be narrowed down to two, the Christian and the non-Christian.

Of the non-Christian views, the truest and most fully substantiated may be found collected and embodied in the teachings of modern Theosophy. We shall not, therefore, need to deal with any other non-Christian views. For, however interesting they might prove, they would cast no light upon our subject.

The Theosophical explanation of the soul's incarnation in matter has behind it the beliefs of many thinkers of many creeds. But although such efforts to reach the truth demand the reverence of all, the Christian revelation leads us to very different conclusions and by a very different way. According to the non-Christian view, man's bodily life is due to a normal and natural descent of the spiritual entity into matter, from which it must rise, and is rising again by a process of evolution. Hence the interminable series of living beings as we know them with man at their head. But this descent does not teach what is implied by the Christian doctrine of the Fall, although to a certain extent it may seem to correspond to it fairly exactly. The points of difference are not only very distinct, but they are of the greatest importance, since they lead from the outset to serious errors, until finally the beliefs of Christianity and Theosophy deviate into diametrical and violent opposition.

With regard to the contrasting teachings concerning the Fall, the Theosophical view does not attribute the descent of spirit into matter to any personal act of violation of the divine will, but only to a lapse into inferior conditions, which being due to natural causes can also be remedied by natural causes. This view admits of no sin in the Fall, no personal disobedience, no wilful transgression of the laws of God, no personal separation from a personal divine life and a divine love, no need for a personal divine love in order to effect a restoration. The only vitiation Theosophy knows of in the fallen entity is that caused by the impersonal influence of matter, for matter is supposed to contain the principle of all evil. Thus we are confronted with a profound contrast. For at the very beginning in the descent into organic life the non-Christian view loses sight altogether of the personal and truly spiritual element both of God and man. In its explanation of origins nothing is known of the previous close relations existing between God and man. The spiritual emotions and affections which represent the dominant factors of man's earthly existence ultimately determining his attitude to God and to his fellows are ruled out altogether from these primary pages of the soul's history. As though in the pre-organic period they were non-existent, both in God and in the souls He had created.

In the Christian account we find all this reversed. These spiritual factors are shown as performing

most important functions, and producing such results as we find them normally causing in earth-life. Thus according to a pre-organic Fall, instead of attributing the descent into matter merely to the impersonal power of material attraction, the Christian explanation unveils the ulterior spiritual factor of the wickedness and rebellion of living wills. For in place of the former prevailing love and unity of a life lived in close communion with God, we hear of the alienation of affections, of violation of the divine love and holiness, and the consequent passing from light into darkness. Even these preliminary contrasts are sufficient to show that two totally different stories of human life are being unfolded. The one story is a living one, revealing God's love and man's lack of affection. The other story is a lifeless one, telling of the soul's struggle with material influences.

But to press on to further depths of contrast. The logical and inevitable deductions from the Theosophical beliefs stated above are that man's salvation depends entirely upon his own power to resist and control material influences, especially in their most potent and subtle effects upon the will and soul. Theosophy teaches that reaching this supreme condition is a process involving perhaps millions of years and endless returns to bodily life. Through these re-incarnations the purely spiritual element in man is developed from a mere germ into fuller being by continual conflict with material conditions, until finally the soul can complete its development without any further bodily incarnation. In each incarnation

the individual finds himself amid surroundings which by the law of Karma are results of his past lives. Unless the life has been subjected to the strictest discipline and self-control each re-incarnation will tend to retrogression rather than progress.

However interesting these teachings may be for the Christian, a special importance is attached to the central doctrine of re-incarnation. Considering the complexity of the issues already before us, it would be preferable, were choice offered, to omit from these pages all consideration of the subject of re-incarnation. But the nature of a pre-organic Fall, and the necessity of bringing all important contingent issues into full daylight, forbid this course. Moreover, the subject of re-incarnation leads to an important aspect of the Redemption.

Two great questions arise in connection with the theory of re-incarnation. Is it true? Is it in agreement with the teachings of Christianity or contrary to them?

These questions are carefully and truly dealt with in an excellent book recently published by the S.P.C.K. In speaking of the doctrine of re-incarnation the authoress says: [1] "We get into a very large subject here about which the Scriptures are silent, or nearly so, but it is noteworthy that nowhere do they directly contradict the idea of re-incarnation. . . . It is an idea very alien to the Christian mind. These almost endless re-incarnations present a

[1] *Theosophy and Christianity*, by M. Carta Sturge, p. 84.

tedious, prolonged and well-nigh hopeless process of developing the soul. The Theosophists themselves tell us that the progress of the soul in this endless chain is almost inappreciable through many lives; they teach that only those capable of going through special initiations and a training in self-conquest of the severest character can make any decided progress. The whole conception of it leaves us weary and hopeless in the extreme.

"But the speculation arises as it has done before, whether this may not be some part of the evil which Our Lord's Incarnation was to save us from. This stupendous event must have aspects far beyond our ken. We are continually finding new meanings in it, penetrating to greater depths in regard to it, and finding it, as we study it, solving more and more of our difficult human problems."

Although re-incarnation is nowhere taught in the Bible, there are three well-known passages which show that Christ was not anxious to repudiate the doctrine as false. When Jesus asked, "Who do men say that the Son of Man is?" the disciples replied "Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."[1] In reply to His disciples' question, Jesus answered, "but I say unto you, that Elijah is come already, and they knew him not, but did unto him whatsoever they listed."[2] Again, when the disciples asked regarding a man born blind "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind? Jesus

[1] Mat. xvi. 14. [2] Mat. xvii. 11.

answered, Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be manifest in him."[1]

It seems evident, therefore, that whether the doctrine of re-incarnation be true or not, it certainly is not contradictory to the teachings of Christianity. Moreover, if it be true, the teachings of Christianity definitely prove the view that the chains of this bondage have been broken asunder by the Redemption. It would be impossible to do justice to such a subject within our present limits. But the great significant facts in part proclaim their own meaning which can be briefly stated.

In the Fall the effects of sin passed universally to all humanity. As a result we find that the organic life of man is the reverse of a unity, spiritually, and therefore physically. But amid its competitive antagonism, and its endless disparities of imperfection, Christianity announces a great transformation, a great unification, heralding a mystic doctrine of coming peace and goodwill. Amid all the forementioned diversities of fallen humanity, Christianity recognises only one distinction as vital, namely, that impassable line running between those who truly belong to the Kingdom of God and those who do not. Let it be noted, not only that the distinction between the two is purely spiritual, but that the spiritual change in its initial stage is termed a "re-birth." The sacrament of baptism is the outward sign which formally marks and consummates the soul's

[1] John ix. 3.

great change: a change which involves the gift of a new life actual and potential, constituting an emancipation from the supreme domination of evil of all kinds: a change which carries the individual soul into a new and Christian spiritual environment, into the Church which possesses a true joint-life with Christ, also into the conditions of the regenerate life. Obviously the growth of this new-born spiritual vitality may be arrested and removed from its prepared environment. On the other hand, by due loyalty to the given conditions, and due fulfilment of their daily demands, the individual may become a true and sanctified member of the Kingdom of God. Hence follows a consequence which specially concerns our subject. From that kingdom the redeemed souls shall go out no more. They have already been finally re-born. No earth-bound tendencies shall again assert their power and claim them as victims for a retrogressive lapse from their redeemed life in Christ to further incarnation into mortal bodies. As to these facts, we can rely upon the scriptural teaching, that no power shall pluck them from their Redeemer's keeping; for those whom the Son hath made free are free indeed. Somewhere in the many mansions of His Father's house, where He is, there will also His servants be. Possibly these words may contain the direct teaching of Christ that His servants will not again enter upon this mortal life, for He Himself will not be again incarnate. On the other hand, the promise may be of a spiritual fellowship extending all barriers. In any case, the bare

supposition that souls which have truly been made one with Christ in baptism and have remained in true communion with Him throughout life, should be destined to repeat the baptismal re-birth and to face the contested and conquered temptations again in another earth-life is quite untenable.

The fact that re-incarnation is not the lot of the redeemed Christian is reasoned thus by the writer quoted above.

[1] "The language in which Our Lord had to express Himself was most inadequate for the wonderful things He had to reveal, so far as they could be revealed at all. He had to use the best similes He could find. He speaks of saving us from death, as probably the strongest expression He could use, but does not at all fully explain what is meant by that, since it does not seem to have meant actual extermination.

"What did it mean? Far more, no doubt, than we can understand,—miseries, perhaps, we cannot picture to ourselves, of which the hopeless round of re-incarnations may have been a part. And if so what a substitute!" . . .

"In union with Him we are lifted on to another plane, a deeper element in our constitution is vivified, brought into action, into life, and, although Christian endeavour to attain the highest can never cease, we must still struggle, although the path is still upward and difficult, in and through the Incarnation it is a possible path, even for the simplest, for the

[1] *Theosophy and Christianity*, M. C. Sturge., p. 85.

ignorant, and in Him the struggle is bound to be crowned with success. In Him may we not believe, if there is any truth in the teachings relative to re-incarnation, the hopeless round is at an end, and the spiritual development makes progress henceforth in union with Christ ?"

In view of this great work of love and redemption the Christian may read a profound meaning into the glad tidings of that first Christmas dawn. Glad tidings they are indeed, of joy, of hope, of peace, of rest and of light eternal. In order, surely, to emphasise this final departure from the fallen life St. John records the message of the voice from heaven which bade him write : "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

The lines we have followed in this chapter have now brought us to a crucial point regarding the right understanding of a pre-organic Fall. The fact like most others is liable to distortion, and may easily be made a foundation for the superstructure of false conclusions. The non-Christian interpretation of the Fall and the method of salvation based upon it are both fatally erroneous. In the cause of the truth it is necessary to make this clear statement. A further comparison between the Christian doctrine of the Redemption and the artificial plan for man's salvation will bring the subject more fully into the light.

Although Christianity apparently recognises re-incarnation as a possible or actual fact, it refuses

without any qualification to admit that it could ever become a means of final restoration of the soul. From the very nature of the Fall man has become inherently powerless. His salvation lies solely in the redeeming work of Christ. Spiritual development there may be in response to human effort, but only up to a very limited point. To the bliss of the unfallen state there can be no natural way of return. The human spirit did not make itself and cannot remake itself. Holiness, love and a regenerate will can never be the products of cosmic or ethical processes. They are the living creation of Personal and Divine Influences. But it is in rejecting this very fact of the Personality of God and His Personal care for human souls that non-Christian minds have become side-tracked from the truth and from Christ. For just as Theosophy fails to give value to the element of Divine Personality and recognises no violation of the divine will behind the Fall, so it does not seek a changed will but a reinforced will, not a " new heart " towards God so much as a new ascendancy over matter. Inasmuch as it begins with the false belief that the principle of evil is an element residing in impersonal matter, instead of in a personal will, so throughout its system it continues to focus all desires and endeavours upon gaining a perfect control over an environment in which matter plays the most prominent part.

Thus from the first, Theosophy loses sight of the Personality of God and His personal work towards

the restoration and redemption of souls. From this false start, it drifts into a mechanical impersonal view of the soul's environment. Taking this peculiar outlook, the factors of evolution which are to work out the soul's progress are also lifeless and mechanical, save for the struggling souls themselves. But although numerous facts unite in proving that the world of living beings is an essentially spiritual and personal system, full of personality from beginning to end, ordained and helped forward by a Personal God, with motives of personal love behind all His operations, the love of God in Christ remains unrecognised, and is therefore unable to operate. Thus the most life-giving and spiritually constructive element in the human environment is excluded. Without the life-giving touch of God's Personal love and grace the resulting personality must tend towards the lifeless type. The individual may be adorned with the ethical virtues and refinements of a finished culture, yet these adornments will surely often be but imitations of the living graces, mere superficial polish of an external veneer, instead of the abiding fruits of the Holy Spirit. In the attempt to originate living graces from lifeless causes we recognise the presence of the impossible. The angel of the two-edged sword stands across the path.

How could the brutality, the ruthlessness, the self-centred egotism of the organic process, or the cold calculation of man's higher powers endow his heart with love and his soul with peace and gladness ?

Lord, to whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life. Apart from God in Jesus Christ, where in this universe can man reach forth and meet the touch of perfect love and life ? By what contradictory alchemy could ceaseless re-births into fallen conditions, and continuous minglings with the unholy competition and conflicts of bodily existence, clothe the already sinful souls of men with the stainless garments of perfection ? If the Lord Jesus Christ had not become incarnate, would human souls in their re-incarnations on this planet ever have met with anyone holy ? We who are so accustomed to enjoy the goodness, kindness, honesty, safety, and many spiritual blessings of a Christian civilisation are very liable to forget the source from which these beneficent fruits of the Christian Spirit have reached us. Without Christ we should be without them.

Sir John Seeley has reminded us that apart from Him : [1] "Among all the men of the ancient heathen world there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and besides abstaining from vice regarded even a vicious thought with horror."

Had Christ not come to the aid of humanity what would have been the inevitable result of repeated re-births into surroundings thus dominated by evil and ever growing worse ? Since bodily life produces

[1] *Ecce Homo*, Sir John Seeley, p. 192.

and demands an ever closer correspondence with its environment, the returning souls becoming more and more imbued with the accumulated evil of oft-repeated sinful lives, would in time inevitably create conditions of being surpassing in horror all scriptural descriptions of the outer darkness.

In contrast to the impotence of human systems, the facts of history and evolution are all on the side of a belief in the supreme power of the Incarnation. For they show that re-incarnation or no re-incarnation, in spite of untold ages of man's upward struggles, few personalities of the highest types and no great lasting forward movements, either social or spiritual, have appeared as the result of human effort. On the contrary, the records of these epochs show little but the blind erratic steps of the natural man attaining in his social life a certain height of civilisation, but ever returning by revolution or slow degeneration towards the inferior level of his start. Like a planet in its orbit he seemed in pre-Christian times doomed to eternal wandering.

On the other hand, within twenty centuries, what a vast weight of progressive results stand to the credit of Christianity ! Moreover, on closer examination, the results of Christianity will be found to present a strange contrast to all natural developments. They emanate from a different, far deeper and more inward source. It is probable that no natural process such as re-incarnation has ever once brought about such a profound and radical change in the human soul as that which is the normal result

experienced on all sides whenever the power of the Incarnation becomes effective. No hierarchy of souls restored by any natural religion have ever become re-incarnate on this planet to give light to them that sit in darkness, and to guide the feet of humanity into the way of peace. Yet no facts of physical science are more certain than the phenomena of Christianity connected with this wondrous transformation of the will and personality of human beings, wrought out by the saving grace of Christ. It has been repeated over and over again in countless thousands of instances,[1] changing evil, feeble, miserably depressed lives, originally without any but the lowest material aims, into lives strong and radiantly happy, buoyant with all the lofty aims and conscious convictions of men and women who having recognised their Redeemer are once again at one with God in Christ. The self-centredness of the fallen life has lost its supremacy and the God-centredness of the redeemed life has come into being.

But the contrast in hand would not be complete if we failed to note that the saving and vital element in Christianity is exactly the personal element which is of necessity absent from human systems, namely, the power of a Divine Personality—the personal touch and influence of a divine love and a divine holiness. In these later pages we have seen how easily the truth of a pre-organic Fall may be distorted and mixed up with various errors. We have viewed

[1] Vide *Varieties of Religious Experiences*, Prof. Wm. James, p. 189 *et passim*.

the more important of these errors in contrast with the truths of Christianity, noting that their vagaries are in no way connected with a true theory of the Fall but are founded upon a distorted one.

But to pass on to another vital subject, the doctrine of future punishment is undoubtedly greatly fortified by the pre-organic explanation of The Fall. In its light, sin assumes once again the serious and deadly nature which is always attributed to it in the Bible. During the latter half of last century materialistic misconceptions of evolution and the untrue evolutionary theory of the Fall combined to undermine and completely override the plain Gospel teaching. But the truth of a pre-organic Fall abolishes the lack-of-development notion of original sin, revealing it in its unconcealed nature as originally a rebellion against God and as the true cause of all that is evil and painful in human existence.

Thus the sins of our present life are shown again as in the old Gospel teaching. They are seen to belong to a set of causes which have produced most deadly results in the past. And the doctrine which points to the certainty of even worse consequences in the future if these same death-producing causes are repeatedly released will no longer seem illogical, unlikely or unmerciful. On the contrary, the extended views at which we have so briefly glanced reveal in the stupendous magnitude of the redemptive scheme, and in the separation of souls good from evil, an omnipotent vindication of truth, a jealous guar-

dianship of holiness, which has pressed forward the irresistible purpose of human salvation to the utmost, even to the Cross ; adding to this manifestation of wonderful might, a Divine revelation of a far more wonderful love.

If the doctrine of future punishment is so important in its guiding influence and usefulness to fallen humanity that Jesus Christ did not hesitate to proclaim the fact with repeated emphasis, we may be quite sure that its partial obscuration for half a century could not happen without visibly bad effects. These effects are everywhere apparent to-day. To mention a few : the growing lack of restraint and weakening of moral purpose, the loss of a sense of sinfulness and unconsciousness of any need of redeeming grace,—the paramount value set upon pleasure and the general indifference to religion.

Again, if we believe that the Redemption entails the salvation of Christians from the power of evil and from unknown sufferings, it is surely a serious error to allow generations to grow up not only in ignorance of the facts concerned, but under the universal impression that the Bible doctrine of penal consequences is not a truth to be seriously taken into account. It is one thing to magnify the terrible age-long consequences mentioned in the Gospel into a vindictive doctrine of rapid but eternal damnation. It is another to be loyal to this side of Christian teaching and repeatedly to impress on young and old a due warning that God's laws cannot be reversed, but that which a man sows he will

assuredly reap. It is one thing to attempt to frighten people into being virtuous. It is another to recognise the merciful reasonableness of the Bible method, and by informing them of the great facts of human existence to put them in the best possible position for avoiding the deadly lead of false theories and for choosing the right course. Probably the Church of to-day errs on the side of belittling this duty.

Those who can recall the wave of materialism and the gross obscuration of the Fall which followed rapidly upon the publication of evolutionary conclusions will also remember the origin of a prudent and growing disinclination to oppose the current ideas of the moment by insisting in public upon the reality of such obscured subjects as the Fall, the deadliness of sin, and the certainty of its evil and penal consequences. But we duly recognise to-day that the ideas which produced these modern changes towards doctrinal unbelief and religious indifference have themselves turned out to be fallacies. The false materialistic philosophy has passed away. The truth of the Fall still remains, and if freed from all obscuration will undoubtedly again shed forth its most illuminating and indispensable light.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

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CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our main position is that the meaning of the Fall is based upon far deeper and more intelligible truths than those which are generally known to-day. When the whole of the foregoing pages have been carefully considered it will be found that their net result is to restore the truth of a pre-bodily Fall to intelligent students as a comprehensible background to Christianity—a background having the same convincing aspect that it presented to intellectual thinkers in the earliest years of the Church. The main difference being, that whereas the idea of an extra-temporal Fall was to them only a shadowy complex of tradition and intuition, for us it can be a reasoned belief based upon definite and sufficient evidence.

In order to explain the present confusion of religious thought, we followed up the evidence showing not only that such deeper views are in the nature of things necessary to-day under scientific knowledge, but that in due measure they formed the mental background of thinking Christians in the early Church.

But it is by no means easy for us to realise what a heavy veil the literal belief in the Fall-story placed over the popular outlook in bygone centuries. For the rank and file of students it tended to shut out from view all the primary ravages of evil which exist in the lower creation. Man alone fell. Before, there was no sin and the evident traces of it had to be ignored. Man alone was evil and sin-stricken. And if the ground bore part of the penalty laid upon Adam, the animal world at least remained free from the curse. Therefore we shall not be surprised that the existing taint of inherent evil existing throughout the living world did not meet with general recognition from all thinkers. The misreading of Genesis erected a barrier between the life of man and the lower animals which science has broken down. Wherever there is a recognition of the inherent evil existing throughout the organic world, there must be also a conscious or unconscious acceptance of a pre-organic Fall.

In examining the remarkable obscuration of the Fall in the past we observed how Patristic endeavours to arrive at details without physical or revealed data ended in erratic speculation. The rejection of their obvious errors led first to the over-clouding of the deeper views, and finally to their lapsing out of sight before the more easy literal interpretation. In tracing out the history of succeeding events we noted further prominent causes which led to an increasing propagation of the childish views extending all down the ages into the middle of the nineteenth century.

Here, this prolonged period of obscuration was brought to an end by the corrective facts of science. Yet again, instead of the light of the truth, we watched a new set of obscuring causes coming into action, and once again preventing the truth from rising into sight. This time the truth became buried beneath a false theory which not only concealed certain vital facts regarding sin, but imparted a false aspect to the whole story of human life.

On examining this theory of the Fall we discovered, to begin with, that it is based upon a biological impossibility which deprives it of all value as a credible supposition. But this definite result from direct examination of the theory itself did not represent the verdict of the entire evidence. For upon further investigation the conclusions and logical positions to which the theory led afforded also every possible sign of falseness. In addition to these signs of its untruth, as we noticed in Chapter I., the spiritual fruits which it has borne during half a century constitute a pragmatic proof of its false guidance.

On the other hand, the numerous issues with which we have been confronted in the foregoing chapters seem one and all to fall readily into line with the pre-organic theory. Again, this theory has proved capable of solving difficulties and problems otherwise insoluble. It would surely entail no waste of time

to enumerate some of the subjects upon which the pre-organic theory casts light.

1. It explains the great antinomy of the universal and individual guilt resulting from the Fall.[1]

2. It explains thoroughly the problem of pain, both human and of the lower creation.[2]

3. It removes the moral difficulty regarding the justice and fairness of man's trial and failure in the Fall.[3]

4. It explains and vindicates God's dealings with man.[4]

5. It explains otherwise inexplicable features of organic evolution and reduces its chaos of destruction to purposeful order.[5]

6. It shows the true relationship between the Fall and the organic process.[6]

7. It casts a strong light upon the Incarnation and the entry of the Unfallen Son of God into this sin-stricken mortal existence.[7]

8. It reveals the dire need of humanity for Christ's Redeeming Grace.[8]

9. It shows that sin is not an effect of immaturity but is its cause; that although sin has brought about the state of moral impotence which exists in immaturity, in itself it involves a state of active opposition to the will of God.[9]

[1] p. 81. [2] pp. 98, 149 to 152. [3] pp. 151 to 153, 31.
[4] pp. 55, 179. [5] pp. 124 to 126. [6] pp. 124 to 126.
[7] pp. 36, 69. [8] pp. 69 to 71, 117, 165 *et seq.*
[9] pp. 25, 26.

10. It gives a perfectly complete explanation of original sin and its means of derivation.[1]

11. It imparts a far more serious and also inspiring aspect to human life by showing that it does not possess its terrible traits of animalism by origin, essence, and by the will of God, as suggested by the evolutionary theory of the Fall. On the contrary, careful reasoning has shown that bodily existence with all its worst conditions has been necessitated by some deadly spiritual failure and abuse of freewill in which all shared, in which the vital energy of every living unit on earth was involved. No phrases could describe the dispersion of darkness which this revelation can effect when its truth has been fully realised. Instantly its light falls upon the Figure of the Redeemer beside humanity eager to save from the abyss below. At once the effort and discipline of Christian life again become invested with their rightful hope and glory. For verily they mean co-operation in the work of a saving love. Already the supreme power of sin has been broken. True, its curse is seen to be far worse than a passing immaturity. But the inexorable handwriting of natural consequence has been lawfully reversed by the Son of God. He has brought sufficient holiness and love into our life to overcome and kill its sinfulness.

Thus from a pre-organic standpoint an unobstructed view of God's dealings with mankind is available, revealing features of justice, mercy,

[1] pp. 162 to 165.

wisdom and glory not otherwise so clearly visible. Not that the ancient Christian view of human life is altered, but rather restored. The knowledge that God is indeed working with vitiated material in evolution, is in itself a restoration of the old Gospel of light, of explanation, of joy, of peace and comfort. Also it clothes the natural world and human life with a greatly enhanced glory. For if God can invest a world whose natural vitality was at the beginning so vitiated and sin-stricken with such a depth of beauty and with such promise of more, if He has lavished upon a fallen world such a wealth of love, what must be the glory yet to be revealed ? Thus the pre-organic theory affords a complete and divinely beneficent explanation of our mortal existence. As a means of restoring fallen souls, we can readily understand the re-creating efficacy of the organic system. It has every appearance of a method of dealing with vitiated factors. Its human portion strikes all types of minds as a vast system of schooling applied to body, mind and spirit. That is to say, it looks like a means not only of calling out latent potentialities, but also of applying to all of them strongly corrective influences. It is not creative but re-creative. It is not a royal road of unimpeded progress towards excellence, but obviously the uphill and rugged path of a prodigal's return. And truly in Jesus Christ the Father has met humanity very far off from the home from which it came, and towards which its ceaseless journeying is being redirected.

With regard to the biological side of the subject and the significant unveiling of the vitiated vital output effected by science, there is nothing which can be expressed more briefly than it has been in the foregoing chapters. Our view of the organic processes has shown the necessity and aim of the destructive operations, thereby giving a clearer and more complete explanation of evolution than any existing. The breadth of the outlook taken, the expanse of the ground searched, also the varied quarters from which evidence has been forthcoming, render it probable that the conclusion regarding the theory of a pre-organic Fall is correct. The truth of this theory seems proved by the fact that it conflicts with no ascertained truths, but coincides with all. On the other hand, since the theory starts with the extra-temporal, the inevitable element of the unknown is brought very close to us, and many questions connected with the original conditions of human existence and the nature of its holy unity might be asked. But it would be unreasonable to expect to possess information about the unfallen, original being or beings whose vital units we now know in their highest expression as mankind. The idea of humanity as a complex unity is, however, no mere speculation. It is not only scriptural, but actual, in the unification being wrought out by Christ. If anyone can tell the exact relationship which will exist between the perfected human souls in the spiritual unity of being of which Christ will be the Head, they will also be near to giving an answer to

the question as to the relationship which existed between the individual pre-organic beings before the Fall occurred. It is at least certain that the human personality is no more a simple creation on the psychical side than the body with its cells is on the physical. The unity is in both cases a most complex diversity. So by analogy we may think of the personality of the unfallen beings as once containing within the unity of themselves and their God-centred corporate life all the units of vitiated energy which are now existing as self-centred individualised beings in the organic world. As in Adam all died out of the unity of the perfect existence, so in Christ shall all be made truly alive, alive by losing the limitations of self-centred existence and partaking again of the true unity of the redeemed in Christ. But in this mystical borderland of the subject even the use of the figure Adam becomes the source of confusion, unless careful discrimination is exercised. For in the Bible Adam is used as the symbol of the original being of Paradise, and the same figure is used to express the fallen state of being. In the Patristic writings the unspecified interchange of the two leads at times to much confusion.

In dealing with the evidence of evolutionary phenomena in the foregoing pages, we have seen how unmistakably God in His mercy has come to the rescue of fallen humanity. We have briefly traced out in the actual facts of natural history the

wonderful manner in which His laws, His material creations and His Spirit have co-operated to turn our evil into good, and our great catastrophe into the blessedness of a new life, redeemed from the bottomless pit and full now of hope and joy. We have seen how by the Incarnation He has miraculously brought our far-off fallen animal life close to, even into vital saving touch with Himself. When we fully realise the once blighted nature of all our powers and of our very life itself, how the beauty of the natural world with its harmonies and graces speak of a Father's personal care and love! Verily He has decked our sick-room in our sleep, without our consciousness and in lavish forgiveness of our past. By the secret operations of His physical laws God has cast a halo of brightness over all the ephemeral efforts of nature, concealing as beneath a veil the feebleness of powers ruined at their source. All that is beautiful in sight and sound are gifts with which He has brightened the lot of mortals. They are reflections of His own perfections. They are the best robes of radiant colours brought forth by the command of a Father's love. They are the rings, the jewelled ornaments, which carry their own unspeakable message of sympathy.

No doubt, equally with others, the young have been great losers from the obscuration of the Fall. Their loss has been a loss in youth for which every day of life may become the poorer. In how many millions of cases has the lack of any clear belief and

knowledge of this great fundamental fact turned the gold of their lives into dross. To misunderstand the Fall is to misunderstand evolution, and to misunderstand evolution is often to misunderstand both God and man and life itself. If the story of evolution be only half told, or wrongly told, if people are induced to believe that their heritage of animalism, with the self-centring bias of the primary instincts, is by initial origin a means willingly devised by God for eventually conferring upon some favoured individuals the gift of a sinless God-centred personality, they will be started upon the path of life blindfolded to the actual dangers of their way. Let the ordinary individual be influenced by the impressive falsehood that he is by true and first origin an animal, let him lapse into the conclusion that God willingly made him an animal and meant him to be one, naturally possessed of extremely strong tendencies towards the pleasures of the body, and he will soon find logical and plausible excuses for almost every kind of selfishness, lack of restraint and sin. Of sex, he will come to believe that the satisfaction of instinct, if natural and normal, must be harmless and good, or at worst never very far removed from it. If he should be confronted with the claims of the moral law, the above line of thought will too often cause him to go his own way and lay the blame upon his Maker.

On the other hand, let but the whole story and the true story be told, with the complementary portions as made known by science, by history and by revelation. Let the truth be made clear, that God

originally gave to mankind the glorious gift of actual Sonship, that He made man what we know and feel an Almighty and Holy Creator must have made him, namely, a personality truly created in His Own Image; that is to say, a being exalted by origin with the endowments of spotless virtues and holiness. Let him understand in outline the true meaning of the Fall. Let him realise that his body, with all its imperfections, as well as his participation in sinful human existence, is due to an extra-temporal, voluntary association of his own life and free-willed being with a transgression of the laws of God. Let him recognise the horrible character of the bygone animal stages. Let him think over and value the ascent by which man has reached his present level. Let him understand very clearly how he has been met by the redemptive work and grace of the Divine Love. If these fundamental truths are well and thoroughly taught there will be no mental start in the wrong direction, no going out of the young to meet the dangers of life blindfolded, to stumble so helplessly into its pitfalls. To the ordinary intelligent person thus put upon the track of God's truth, the above facts will cast a lasting glow of interest upon many otherwise dry fragments of doctrine. They will verify themselves and amplify themselves at all the fruitful halting-places of life's journey. Such an individual will begin with the great advantage of seeing things in a true light from the first.

The important conclusion to which the above

considerations lead is that in these days when the facts of evolution must necessarily be faced at some time, they should be presented early and presented in a true light. Surely in the nature of things evolutionary knowledge forms the background of Christian doctrine. It should therefore be made a subsidiary foundation of religious education. Except with the very young, instead of building the structure of biblical knowledge apart from the facts of nature, the book of nature should be opened with the Bible. Instead of the subject of religion being presented as somewhat visionary, out of touch with present-day life and unsupported by its facts, the two subjects of the bodily history of man and the biblical history of his spiritual life should be unfolded together. Thus by outlining the main facts of evolution and the Fall a revealing light would be shed upon the intricate structure of the central Christian doctrines. By following the natural sequence of events in the history of man's soul-life and bodily life the whole story becomes easy to understand. By such a method the glorious truths which centre around the Incarnation would become lit up with their inherent glory of love, of wonder and interest. Thus our modern religious education would by natural means be restored to its former integrity and efficiency. We should be repairing the unnecessary demolition caused by the impact of evolutionary knowledge. Once again instructors would be showing Christian truths to the young against an informing, helpful background. Not as now, holding

up such vital facts as sin and redemption in a dim and clouded mental light, but showing them in the radiant and impressive setting in which God Himself has placed and unveiled them.

Finally, there is a further question to which space forbids a full reply. It is, what kind of a picture is drawn by the facts of man's ascent, as gleaned from all sources of information? Surely, no truer outline could be given than the Parable of The Prodigal Son. Although spoken of the individual sinner, it gives with equal fidelity the soul-story of the race. It shows that the panorama of vital movements is at heart a movement towards God. Each step in man's past awakening from the death of animalism brought him fuller consciousness of being in a "far-off" land. Every further quickening aroused a sense of loss, of deficiency, of guilt. Every perception of glory led to vague remorse and to profound unrest. Hence Tyndall's "immovable basis of the religious sentiment in man." Yet in spite of deadness, blind gropings and side-tracked vagaries, at last the day dawned when man knew that The Avenger of his ruin would come to bring him help. Then shone the lights of hope and expectation. Then came the Incarnation of The Son of God, then the era of praise, of hymn and anthem; in which fallen souls by the million, enabled by His Grace, are ever attaining to the great change of will, making once and for ever the great decision, "I will arise and go to my Father."

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